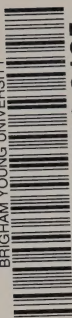


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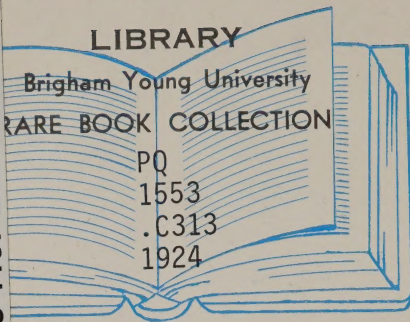
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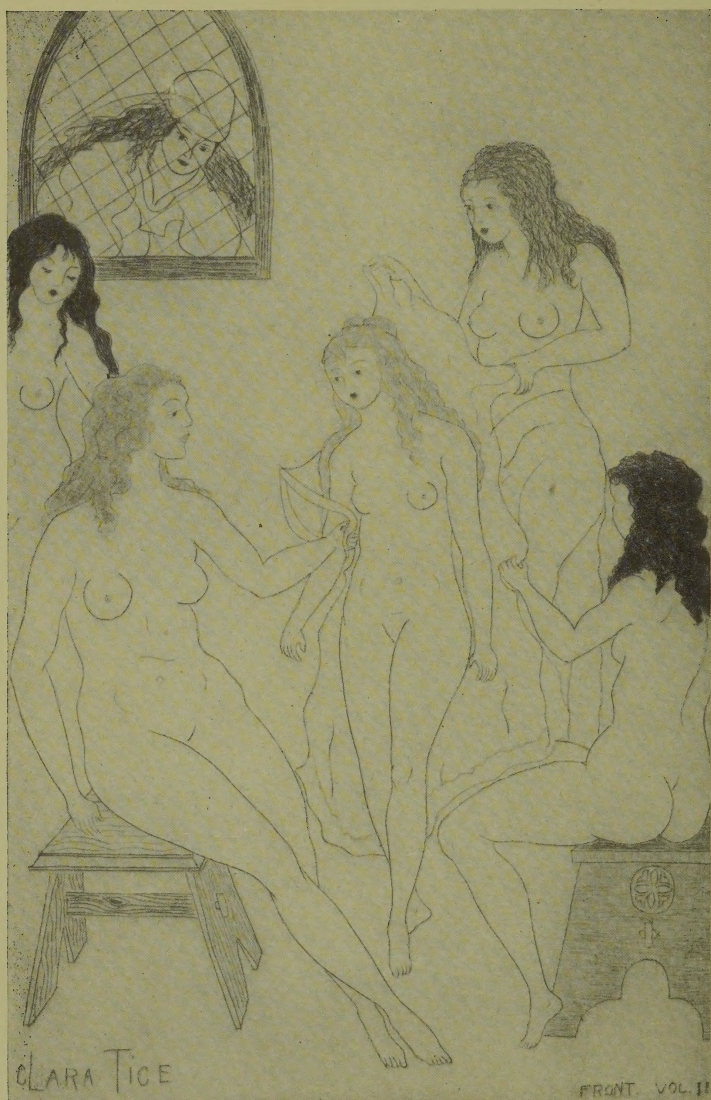
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*ONE HUNDRED
MERRIE & DELIGHTSOME
STORIES*

[Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles]

Volume Two



ONE HUNDRED
MERRIE & DELIGHTSOME
STORIES

[*Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*]

With an Introduction by
ARTHUR MACHEN

Illustrated with
16 full page Etching-Engravings
by
Clara Tice

* *

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, 1924

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ONE HUNDRED MERRIE AND
DELIGHTSOME STORIES

VOLUME TWO

ONE HUNDRED MERRIE AND DELIGHTSOME STORIES

XLVII

TWO MULES DROWNED TOGETHER

By MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE

Of a President who, knowing of the immoral conduct of his wife, caused her to be drowned by her mule, which had been kept without drink for a week, and given salt to eat—as is more clearly related hereafter.¹

In Provence there lived formerly a President of great and high renown, who was a most learned clerk and prudent man, valiant in arms, discreet in counsel, and, in short, had all the advantages which man could enjoy.

One thing only was wanting to him, and that was the one that vexed him most, and with good cause—and it

¹ This is believed to be a true story. The person who got rid of his wife in this cunning way was Chaffrey Carlès, President of the Parliament of Grenoble. He was skilled in Latin and “the humanities”—in the plural only it would appear—and was chosen by Anne of Brittany, the wife of Louis XII, to teach her daughter, Renée, afterwards Duchess of Ferrara. On the front of a house in the Rue de Cleres, in Grenoble, is carved a coat of arms held by an angel who has her finger on her lips. The arms are those of the Carlès family and the figure is supposed to refer to this story. At any rate, the secret was very badly kept, for the story seems to have been widely known within a few years of its occurrence.

The story is so dramatic that it has been often imitated.

was that he had a wife who was far from good. The good lord saw and knew that his wife was unfaithful and inclined to play the whore, but the sense that God had given him, told him that there was no remedy except to hold his tongue or die, for he had often both seen and read that nothing would cure a woman of that complaint.

But, at any rate, you may imagine that a man of courage and virtue, as he was, was far from happy, and that his misfortune rankled in his sorrowing heart. Yet as he outwardly appeared to know or see nothing of his wife's misconduct, one of his servants came to him one day when he was alone in his chamber, and said:

"Monsieur, I want to inform you, as I ought, of something which particularly touches your honour. I have watched your wife's conduct, and I can assure you that she does not keep the faith she promised, for a certain person (whom he named) occupies your place very often."

The good President, who knew as well or better than the servant who made the report, how his wife behaved, replied angrily:

"Ha! scoundrel, I am sure that you lie in all you say! I know my wife too well, and she is not what you say—no! Do you think I keep you to utter lies about a wife who is good and faithful to me? I will have no more of you; tell me what I owe you and then go, and never enter my sight again if you value your life!"

The poor servant, who thought he was doing his master a great service, said how much was due to him, received his money and went, but the President, seeing that the unfaithfulness became more and more evident, was as vexed and troubled as he could be. He could

not devise any plan by which he could honestly get rid of her, but it happened that God willed, or fortune permitted that his wife was going to a wedding shortly, and he thought it might be made to turn out lucky for him.

He went to the servant who had charge of the horses and a fine mule that he had, and said:

"Take care that you give nothing to drink to my mule either night or day, until I give you further orders, and whenever you give it its hay, mix a good handful of salt with it—but do not say a word about it."

"I will say nothing," said the servant, "and I will do whatever you command me."

When the wedding-day of the cousin of the President's wife drew near, she said to her husband:

"Monsieur, if it be your pleasure, I would willingly attend the wedding of my cousin, which will take place next Sunday, at such a place."

"Very well, my dear; I am satisfied; go, and God guide you."

"Thank you, monsieur," she replied, "but I know not exactly how to go. I do not wish to take my carriage; your nag is so skittish that I am afraid to undertake the journey on it."

"Well, my dear, take my mule—it looks well, goes nicely and quietly, and is more sure-footed than any animal I ever saw."

"Faith!" she said, "I thank you: you are a good husband."

The day of departure arrived, and all the servants of Madame were ready, and also the women who were to serve her and accompany her, and two or three cavaliers who were to escort Madame, and they asked if Madame

were also ready, and she informed them that she would come at once.

When she was dressed, she came down, and they brought her the mule which had not drank for eight days, and was mad with thirst, so much salt had it eaten. When she was mounted, the cavaliers went first, making their horses caracole, and thus did all the company pass through the town into the country, and on till they came to a defile through which the great river Rhone rushes with marvellous swiftness. And when the mule which had drank nothing for eight days saw the river, it sought neither bridge nor ford, but made one leap into the river, with its load, which was the precious body of Madame.

All the attendants saw the accident, but they could give no help; so was Madame drowned, which was a great misfortune. And the mule, when it had drunk its fill, swam across the Rhone till it reached the shore, and was saved.

All were much troubled and sorrowful that Madame was lost, and they returned to the town. One of the servants went to the President, who was in his room expecting the news; and with much sorrow told him of the death of his wife.

The good President, who in his heart was more glad than sorry, showed great contrition, and fell down, and displayed much sorrow and regret for his good wife. He cursed the mule, and the wedding to which his wife was going.

"And by God!" he said, "it is a great reproach to all you people that were there that you did not save my poor wife, who loved you all so much; you are all cowardly wretches, and you have clearly shown it."

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The servant excused himself, as did the others also, as well as they could, and left the President, who praised God with uplifted hands that he was rid of his wife.

He gave his wife's body a handsome funeral, but—as you may imagine—although he was of a fit and proper age, he took care never to marry again, lest he should once more incur the same misfortune.

XLVIII

THE CHASTE MOUTH

By MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE

Of a woman who could not suffer herself to be kissed, though she willingly gave up all the rest of her body, except the mouth, to her lover—and the reason that she gave for this.

A noble youth fell in love with a young damsel who was married, and when he had made her acquaintance, told her, as plainly as he could, his case, and declared that he was ill for love of her,—and, to tell the truth, he was much smitten.

She listened to him graciously enough, and after their first interview, he left well satisfied with the reply he had received. But if he had been love-sick before he made the avowal, he was still more so afterwards. He could not sleep night or day for thinking of his mistress, and by what means he could gain her favour.

He returned to the charge when he saw his opportunity, and God knows, if he spoke well the first time, he played his part still better on the second occasion, and, by good luck, he found his mistress not disinclined to grant his request,—at which he was in no small degree pleased. And as he had not always the time or leisure to come and see her, he told her on that occasion of the desire he had to do her a service in any manner that he could, and she thanked him and was as kind as could be.

In short, he found in her so great courtesy, and kindness, and fair words, that he could not reasonably expect more, and thereupon wished to kiss, but she refused point-blank; nor would he even obtain a kiss when he said farewell, at which he was much astonished.

After he had left her, he doubted much whether he should ever gain her love, seeing that he could not obtain a single kiss, but he comforted himself by remembering the loving words she had said when they parted, and the hope she had given him.

He again laid siege to her; in short, came and went so often, that his mistress at last give him a secret assignation, where they could say all that they had to say, in private. And when he took leave of her, he embraced her gently and would have kissed her, but she defended herself vigorously, and said to him, harshly:

“Go away, go away! and leave me alone! I do not want to be kissed!”

He excused his conduct as he best could, and left.

“What is this?” he said to himself. “I have never seen a woman like that! She gives me the best possible reception, and has already given me all that I have dared to ask—yet I cannot obtain one poor, little kiss.”

At the appointed time, he went to the place his mistress had named, and did at his leisure that for which he came, for he lay in her arms all one happy night, and did whatsoever he wished, except kiss her, and that he could never manage.

“I do not understand these manners,” he said to himself; “this woman lets me sleep with her, and do whatever I like to her; but I have no more chance of getting a single kiss than I have of finding the true Cross! Mor-

bleu! I cannot make it out; there is some mystery about it, and I must find out what it is."

One day when they were enjoying themselves and were both gay, he said:

"My dear, I beg of you to tell me the reason why you invariably refuse to give me a kiss? You have graciously allowed me to enjoy all your fair and sweet body—and yet you refuse me a little kiss!"

"Faith! my friend," she replied, "as you say, a kiss I have always refused you,—so never expect it, for you will never get it. There is a very good reason for that, as I will tell you. It is true that when I married my husband, I promised him—with the mouth only—many fine things. And since it is my mouth that swore and promised to be chaste, I will keep it for him, and would rather die than let anyone else touch it—it belongs to him and no other, and you must not expect to have anything to do with it. But my backside has never promised or sworn anything to him; do with that and the rest of me—my mouth excepted—whatever you please; I give it all to you."

Her lover laughed loudly, and said:

"I thank you, dearest! You say well, and I am greatly pleased that you are honest enough to keep your promise."

"God forbid," she answered, "that I should ever break it."

So, in the manner that you have heard, was this woman shared between them; the husband had the mouth only, and her lover all the rest, and if, by chance, the husband ever used any other part of her, it was rather by way of a loan, for they belonged to the

lover by gift of the said woman. But at all events, the husband had this advantage, that his wife was content to let him have the use of that which she had given to her lover ; but on no account would she permit the lover to enjoy that which she had bestowed upon her husband.

XLIX

THE SCARLET BACKSIDE

By PIERRE DAVID

Of one who saw his wife with a man to whom she gave the whole of her body, except her backside, which she left for her husband, and he made her dress, one day when his friends were present, in a woollen gown, on the backside of which was a piece of fine scarlet, and so left her before all their friends.

I am well aware that formerly there lived in the city of Arras, a worthy merchant, who had the misfortune to have married a wife who was not the best woman in the world, for when she saw a chance, she would slip as easily as an old cross-bow.

The good merchant suspected his wife's misdeeds, and was also informed by several of his friends and neighbours. Thereupon he fell into a great frenzy and profound melancholy; which did not mend matters. Then he determined to try whether he could know for certain that which was hardly likely to please him—that is to see one or more of those who were his deputies come to his house to visit his wife.

So one day he pretended to go out, and hid himself in a chamber of his house of which he alone had the key. The said chamber looked upon the street and the courtyard, and by several secret openings and chinks upon several other chambers in the house.

As soon as the good woman thought her husband had gone, she let one of the lovers who used to come to her know of it, and he obeyed the summons as he should, for he followed close on the heels of the wench who was sent to fetch him.

The husband, who, as has been said, was in his secret chamber, saw the man who was to take his place enter the house, but he said not a word, for he wished to know more if possible.

When the lover was in the house, the lady led him by the hand into her chamber, conversing all the while. Then she locked the door, and they began to kiss and to cuddle, and enjoy themselves, and the good woman pulled off her gown and appeared in a plain petticoat, and her companion threw his arms round her, and did that for which he came. The poor husband, meanwhile, saw all this through a little grating, and you may imagine was not very comfortable; he was even so close to them that he could hear plainly all they said. When the battle between the good woman and her lover was over, they sat upon a couch that was in the chamber, and talked of various matters. And as the lover looked upon his mistress, who was marvellously fair, he began to kiss her again, and as he kissed her he said:

"Darling, to whom does this sweet mouth belong?"

"It is yours, sweet friend," she replied.

"I thank you. And these beautiful eyes?"

"Yours also," she said.

"And this fair rounded bosom—does that belong to me?" he asked.

"Yes, by my oath, to you and none other," she replied.

Afterwards he put his hand upon her belly, and upon

every part, and each time asked: "Whose is this, darling?"

"There is no need to ask; you know well enough that it is all yours."

Then he put his hand upon her big backside, and asked smiling:

"And whose is this?"

"It is my husband's," she said. "That is his share; but all the rest is yours."

"Truly," he said, "I thank you greatly. I cannot complain, for you have given me all the best parts. On the other hand, be assured that I am yours entirely."

"I well know it," she said, and with that the combat of love began again between them, and more vigorously than ever, and that being finished, the lover left the house.

The poor husband, who had seen and heard everything, could stand no more; he was in a terrible rage, nevertheless he suppressed his wrath, and the next day appeared, as though he had just come back from a journey.

At dinner that day, he said that he wished to give a great feast on the following Sunday to her father and mother, and such and such of her relations and cousins, and that she was to lay in great store of provisions that they might enjoy themselves that day. She promised to do this and to invite the guests.

Sunday came, the dinner was prepared, those who were bidden all appeared, and each took the place the host designated, but the merchant remained standing, and so did his wife, until the first course was served.

When the first course was placed on the table, the merchant who had secretly caused to be made for his



wife a robe of thick duffle grey with a large patch of scarlet cloth on the backside, said to his wife: "Come with me to the bedroom."

He walked first, and she followed him. When they were there, he made her take off her gown, and showing her the aforesaid gown of duffle grey, said: "Put on this dress!"

She looked, and saw that it was made of coarse stuff, and was much surprised, and could not imagine why her husband wished her to dress in this manner.

"For what purpose do you wish me to put this on?" she asked.

"Never mind," he replied, "I wish you to wear it."

"Faith!" she replied, "I don't like it! I won't put it on! Are you mad? Do you want all your people and mine to laugh at us both?"

"Mad or sane," he said, "you will wear it."

"At least," she answered, "let me know why."

"You will know that in good time."

In short, she was compelled to put on this gown, which had a very strange appearance, and in this apparel she was led to the table, where most of her relations and friends were seated.

But you imagine they were very astonished to see her thus dressed, and, as you may suppose, she was very much ashamed, and would not have come to the table if she had not been compelled.

Some of her relatives said they had the right to know the meaning of this strange apparel, but her husband replied that they were to enjoy their dinner, and afterwards they should know.

The poor woman who was dressed in this strange garb could eat but little; there was a mystery connected

with the gown which oppressed her spirits. She would have been even more troubled if she had known the meaning of the scarlet patch, but she did not.

The dinner was at length over, the table was removed, grace was said, and everyone stood up. Then the husband came forward and began to speak, and said:

"All you who are here assembled, I will, if you wish, tell you briefly why I have called you together, and why I have dressed my wife in this apparel. It is true that I had been informed that your relative here kept but ill the vows she had made to me before the priest, nevertheless I would not lightly believe that which was told me, but wished to learn the truth for myself, and six days ago I pretended to go abroad, and hid myself in an upstairs chamber. I had scarcely come there before there arrived a certain man, whom my wife led into her chamber, where they did whatsoever best pleased them. And amongst other questions, the man demanded of her to whom belonged her mouth, her eyes, her hands, her belly, her 'front,' and her thighs? And she replied, 'To you, dear.' And when he came to her backside, he asked: 'And whose is this, darling?' 'My husband's,' she replied. Therefore I have dressed her thus. She said that only her backside was mine, and I have caused it to be attired as becomes my condition. The rest of her have I clad in the garb which is befitting an unfaithful and dishonoured woman, for such she is, and as such I give her back to you."

The company was much astonished to hear this speech, and the poor woman overcome with shame. She never again occupied a position in her husband's house, but lived, dishonoured and ashamed, amongst her own people.

L

TIT FOR TAT

By ANTOINE DE LA SALE

*Of a father who tried to kill his son because the young man wanted to lie with his grandmother, and the reply made by the said son.*¹

Young men like to travel and to seek after adventures; and thus it was with the son of a labourer, of Lannoys, who from the age of ten until he was twenty-six, was away from home; and from his departure until his return, his father and mother heard no news of him, so they often thought that he was dead.

He returned at last, and God knows what joy there was in the house, and how he was feasted to the best of such poor means as God had given them.

But the one who most rejoiced to see him was his grandmother, his father's mother. She was most joyful at his return, and kissed him more than fifty times, and ceased not to praise God for having restored her grandson in good health.

After the feasting was over, bed-time came. There were in the cottage but two beds—the one for the father and mother, and the other for the grandmother. So

¹ By Antoine de la Sale. He has appended his own name to this story; in other cases he appears as "L'Acteur," that is to say, the "Editor." (See No. 51.)

The story is taken from Sacchetti or Poggio. The idea has suggested itself to many writers, including Laurence Sterne, in "Tristram Shandy."

it was arranged that the son should sleep with his grandmother, at which she was very glad, but he grumbled, and only complied to oblige his parents, and as a make-shift for one night.

When he was in bed with his grandmother, it happened, I know not how, that he began to get on the top of her.

"What are you doing?" she cried.

"Never you mind," he replied, "and hold your tongue."

When she saw that he really meant to ravish her, she began to cry out as loud as she could for her son, who slept in the next room, and then jumped out of bed and went and complained to him, weeping bitterly meanwhile.

When the other heard his mother's complaint, and the unfilial conduct of his son, he sprang out of bed in great wrath, and swore that he would kill the young man.

The son heard this threat, so he rose quickly, slipped out of the house, and made his escape. His father followed him, but not being so light of foot, found the pursuit hopeless, so returned home, where his mother was still grieving over the offence her grandson had committed.

"Never mind, mother!" he said. "I will avenge you."

I know not how many days after that, the father saw his son playing tennis in the town of Laon, and drawing his dagger, went towards him, and would have stabbed him, but the young man slipped away and his father was seized and disarmed.

There were many there who knew that the two were father and son; so one said to the son:

"How does this come about? What have you done to your father that he should seek to kill you?"

“Faith! nothing,” he replied. “He is quite in the wrong. He wants to do me all the harm in the world, because, just for once, I would ride his mother—whereas he has mounted mine more than five hundred times, and I never said a word about it.”

All those who heard this reply began to laugh heartily, and swore that he must be a good fellow. So they did their best to make peace for him with his father, and at last they succeeded, and all was forgiven and forgotten on both sides.

LI

THE REAL FATHERS

By THE EDITOR

Of a woman who on her death-bed, in the absence of her husband, made over her children to those to whom they belonged, and how one of the youngest of the children informed his father.

There formerly lived in Paris, a woman who was married to a good and simple man—he was one of our friends and it would have been impossible to have had a better. This woman was very beautiful and complaisant, and, when she was young, she never refused her favours to those who pleased her, so that she had as many children by her lovers as by her husband—about twelve or thirteen in all.

When at last she was very ill, and about to die, she thought she would confess her sins and ease her conscience. She had all her children brought to her, and it almost broke her heart to think of leaving them. She thought it would not be right to leave her husband the charge of so many children, of some of which he was not the father, though he believed he was, and thought her as good a woman as any in Paris.

By means of a woman who was nursing her, she sent for two men who in past times had been favoured lovers. They came to her at once, whilst her husband was gone away to fetch a doctor and an apothecary, as she had begged him to do.

When she saw these two men, she made all her children come to her, and then said:

"You, such an one, you know what passed between us two in former days. I now repent of it bitterly, and if Our Lord does not show me the mercy I ask of Him, it will cost me dear in the next world. I have committed faults, I know, but to add another to them would be to make matters worse. Here are such and such of my children;—they are yours, and my husband believes that they are his. You cannot have the conscience to make him keep them, so I beg that after my death, which will be very soon, that you will take them and bring them up as a father should, for they are, in fact, your own."

She spoke in the same manner to the other man, showing him the other children:

"Such and such are, I assure, yours. I leave them to your care, requesting you to perform your duty towards them. If you will promise me to care for them, I shall die in peace."

As she was thus distributing her children, her husband returned home, and was met by one of his little sons, who was only about four years old. The child ran downstairs to him in such haste that he nearly lost his breath, and when he came to his father he said:

"Alas, father! come quickly, in God's name!"

"What has happened?" asked his father. "Is your mother dead?"

"No, no," said the child, "but make haste upstairs, or you will have no children left. Two men have come to see mother, and she is giving them most of my brothers and sisters. If you do not make haste, she will give them all away."

The good man could not understand what his son

meant, so he hastened upstairs and found his wife very ill, and with her the nurse, two of his neighbours, and his children.

He asked the meaning of the tale his son had told him about giving away his children.

"You will know later on," she said; so he did not trouble himself further, for he never doubted her in the least.

The neighbours went away, commending the dying woman to God, and promising to do all she had requested, for which she thanked them.

When the hour of her death drew near, she begged her husband to pardon her, and told him of the misdeeds she had committed during the years she had lived with him, and how such and such of the children belonged to a certain man, and such to another—that is to say those before-mentioned—and that after her death they would take charge of their own children.

He was much astonished to hear this news, nevertheless he pardoned her for all her misdeeds, and then she died, and he sent the children to the persons she had mentioned, who kept them.

And thus he was rid of his wife and his children, and felt much less regret for the loss of his wife than he did for the loss of the children.

LII

THE THREE REMINDERS

By MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE

Of three counsels that a father, when on his deathbed, gave his son, but to which the son paid no heed. And how he renounced a young girl he had married, because he saw her lying with the family chaplain the first night after their wedding.¹

Once upon a time there was a nobleman who was wise, prudent, and virtuous. When he was on his deathbed, he settled his affairs, eased his conscience as best he could, and then called his only son to whom he left his worldly wealth.

After asking his son to be sure and pray for the repose of his soul and that of his mother, to help them out of purgatory, he gave him three farewell counsels, saying:

“My dear son, I advise you first of all never to stay in the house of a friend who gives you black bread to eat. Secondly, never gallop your horse in a valley. Thirdly, never choose a wife of a foreign nation. Always bear these three things in mind, and I have no doubt you will be fortunate,—but, if you act to the contrary, be sure you would have done better to follow your father’s advice.”

The good son thanked his father for his wise counsels and promised that he would heed them and never act contrary to them.

¹ Taken from Sacchetti.

His father died soon after, and was buried with all befitting pomp and ceremony; for his son wished to do his duty to one to whom he owed everything.

Some time after this, the young nobleman, who was now an orphan and did not understand household affairs, made the acquaintance of a neighbour, whom he constantly visited, drinking and eating at his house.

This friend, who was married and had a beautiful wife, became very jealous, and suspected that our young nobleman came on purpose to see his wife, and that he was in reality her lover.

This made him very uncomfortable, but he could think of no means of getting rid of his guest, for it would have been useless to have told him what he thought, so he determined that little by little he would behave in such a way that, if the young man were not too stupid, he would see that his frequent visits were far from welcome.

To put this project into execution, he caused black bread to be served at meals, instead of white. After a few of these repasts, the young nobleman remembered his father's advice. He knew that he had done wrong, and secretly hid a piece of the black bread in his sleeve and took it home with him, and to remind himself, he hung it by a piece of string from a nail in the wall of his best chamber, and did not visit his neighbour's house as formerly.

One day after that, he, being fond of amusement, was in the fields, and his dogs put up a hare. He spurred his horse after them, and came up with them in a valley, when his horse, which was galloping fast, slipped, and broke its neck.

He was very thankful to find that his life was safe, and that he had escaped without injury. He had the hare

for his reward, and as he held it up, and then looked at the horse of which he had been so fond, he remembered the second piece of advice his father had given him, and which, if he had kept in mind, he would have been spared the loss of his horse, and also the risk of losing his life.

When he arrived home, he had the horse's skin hung by a cord next to the black bread; to remind him of the second counsel his father had given him.

Some time after this, he took it in his head to travel and see foreign countries, and having arranged all his affairs, he set out on his journey, and after seeing many strange lands, he at last took up his abode in the house of a great lord, where he became such a favourite that the lord was pleased to give him his daughter in marriage, on account of his pleasant manners and virtues.

In short, he was betrothed to the girl, and the wedding-day came. But when he supposed that he was to pass the night with her, he was told that it was not the custom of the country to sleep the first night with one's wife, and that he must have patience until the next night.

"Since it is the custom of the country," he said, "I do not wish it broken for me."

After the dancing was over, his bride was conducted to one room, and he to another. He saw that there was only a thin partition of plaster between the two rooms. He made a hole with his sword in the partition, and saw his bride jump into bed; he saw also the chaplain of the household jump in after her, to keep her company in case she was afraid, or else to try the merchandise, or take tithes as monks do.

Our young nobleman, when he saw these goings-on, reflected that he still had some tow left on his distaff, and then there flashed across his mind the recollection of the

counsel his good father had given him, and which he had so badly kept.

He comforted himself with the thought that the affair had not gone so far that he could not get out of it.

The next day, the good chaplain, who had been his substitute for the night, rose early in the morning, but unfortunately left his breeches under the bride's bed. The young nobleman, not pretending to know anything, came to her bedside, and politely saluted her, as he well knew how, and found means to surreptitiously take away the priest's breeches without anyone seeing him.

There were great rejoicings all that day, and when evening came, the bride's bed was prepared and decorated in a most marvellous manner, and she went to bed. The bridegroom was told that that night he could sleep with his wife. He was ready with a reply, and said to the father and mother, and other relations:

"You know not who I am, and yet you have given me your daughter, and bestowed on me the greatest honour ever done to a foreign gentleman, and for which I cannot sufficiently thank you. Nevertheless, I have determined never to lie with my wife until I have shown her, and you, too, who I am, what I possess, and how I am housed."

The girl's father immediately replied:

"We are well aware that you are a nobleman, and in a high position, and that God has not given you so many good qualities without friends and riches to accompany them. We are satisfied; therefore do not leave your marriage unconsummated; we shall have time to see your state and condition whenever you like."

To shorten the story, he vowed and swore that he would never sleep with her if it were not in his own

house, and he conducted hither the bride's father and mother, and many of her relations and friends. He put his house in order to receive them, and to do so arrived there a day before them. And as soon as he alighted, he took the priest's breeches, and hung them in the chamber by the black bread and the horse's skin.

Most cordially received were the relations and friends of the fair bride, and they were much astonished to see the house of the young gentleman so well furnished with vessels, carpets, and all other kinds of furniture, and they thought themselves lucky to have procured such a husband for the girl.

As they were looking round, they came to the great chamber, which was all hung round with fair tapestry, and they perceived the black bread, the horse's skin, and a pair of breeches hanging there; at which they were much astonished, and asked their host the meaning.

He replied that he would willingly, and for a very good reason, tell them the meaning,—but after they had eaten.

Dinner was prepared, and God knows that it was well served. They had no sooner dined, than they demanded the interpretation of the mystery of the black bread, the horse's skin, etc., and the worthy young gentleman related the story at length, and told how his father,—being on his deathbed as has been already narrated,—gave him three counsels.

“The first was never to remain in a house where they gave me black bread. I paid no heed to this advice, for, after his death, I frequented the house of a neighbour, who became jealous of his wife, and in place of the white bread with which I was always served, gave me black; so in recollection and acknowledgment of the truth of that advice, I hung that piece of black bread there. The

second counsel that my father gave me was never to gallop my horse in a valley. I did not bear that in mind, and suffered for it, for one day, when riding in a valley after a hare pursued by my dogs, my horse fell and broke its neck, and it is a wonder I was not badly hurt. To remind me of my escape from death, the skin of the horse I then lost is hung there. The third counsel and advice that my father—whose soul is with God—gave me, was never to marry a woman of a strange nation. In this also I failed, and I will tell you what happened to me. The first night after I was married to your daughter, and you refused to let me sleep with her, I was lodged in a chamber close to hers, and as the partition between her and me was but thin, I pierced a hole with my sword, and I saw the chaplain of your household come and lie with her; but he left his breeches under the bed when he rose in the morning—which breeches I obtained possession of, and have hung them there as evidence of the everlasting truth of the third counsel that my late father gave me, and which I had not duly remembered and borne in mind; but in order that I may not again fall into the same errors, have placed here these three objects to render me prudent. And because—thank God—I am not so much committed to your daughter that she cannot now leave me, I would ask of you to take her back, and return to your own country, for as long as I live I will never come near her. But, because I have made you come a long way to show you that I am not the sort of man to take a priest's leavings, I am prepared to pay your expenses."

The others did not know what to say, but seeing that their misdeeds were discovered, and seeing also that being far from their own country, force would not be on

their side, were content to take the money for their expenses, and return whence they came; for if they had staked more, they would have lost more.

Such, as you have heard, were the three counsels which the good father gave his son, and which should not be forgotten; let everyone remember them, so far as they concern himself.

LIII

THE MUDDLED MARRIAGES

By the ARCHIVIST OF BRUSSELS

Of two men and two women who were waiting to be married at the first Mass in the early morning; and because the priest could not see well, he took the one for the other, and gave to each man the wrong wife, as you will hear.

One morning there were assembled in the cathedral of Sainte Gudule at Brussels many men and women who wished to be married at the first Mass, which is said between four and five o'clock; and amongst others who wished to enter this sweet and happy condition, and promise before the priest to live honestly and uprightly, were a young man and a young woman who were not rich, who were standing near each other, waiting for the priest to call them to marry them.

Near them were an old man and an old woman, who had great possessions and wealth, but who, out of covetousness and the desire to have more, had also promised troth to one another, and were also waiting to be married at this first Mass.

The priest came and recited this much-desired Mass, and at the end thereof, as is the custom, had ranged before him those who wished to be married, of whom there were many, without counting the four I have mentioned.

Now you must know that the good priest, who was standing ready before the altar to accomplish the wed-

ding rites, was blind of one eye, having lost an eye by some mischance a little time before. Also there was hardly any light in the chapel or on the altar, and, as it was winter, it was very dark. So he could not see the couples properly, and when he came to marry them, he took the rich old man and the poor, young girl and joined them together with the wedding ring.

On the other hand, he also took the poor, young man and married him to the rich, old woman,—without any of those in the church noticing it, either men or women—which was very strange, especially on the part of the men, for they dare to raise their heads and their eyes when they are on their knees before the priest, whilst the women who are modest and shy, always look down on the ground.

It is the custom on leaving the church for the friends of the bride to meet her and conduct her to her husband's house. So it was that the poor, young girl was taken to the house of the rich man, and also the rich, old woman was escorted to the cottage of the young man.

When the young bride found herself in the court, and then in the great hall of the house of the man she had married by mistake, she was much astonished, and knew well that was not the house she had left that morning. When she was in the dressing-room, which was hung round with rich tapestries, she saw a large fire, a table well covered, on which a good breakfast was all ready, and a handsome sideboard, well garnished with vessels of all sorts, and was more astonished than ever, and thought it strange she did not know a soul present to whom she could speak.

She was soon relieved of the cloak in which she was huddled up, and when the bridegroom and the others

who were there saw her uncovered, you may guess they were as much surprised as though horns had cropped up on their heads.

"What?" said the bridegroom. "Is that my wife? By Our Lady, I am very lucky. She is much changed since yesterday; I think she must have been to the fountain of youth."

"We do not know," replied those who had brought her, "whence she comes, or what she has done; but we are certain that is the woman you have married, for we took her at the altar, and since then she has never left our hands."

They were all much astonished, and remained long without saying a word, but the most foolish-looking and surprised of all was the poor bride; she was quite downcast and wept gently, for she would have much preferred to be with her lover, whom she had expected to marry that day.

The bridegroom, seeing her so miserable, had pity on her, and said:

"My dear, do not be downcast; you are in a good house, please God, and no one is going to do you any harm. But tell me, if you please, who you are, and what information you can as to how you came here."

When she heard herself spoken to so courteously, she regained a little courage, and gave the names of her father and mother, and said that she was of Brussels, and was betrothed to a certain young man, whom she named, and whom she had expected to have married.

The bridegroom, and all those who were there, began to laugh, and said that the priest had played them this trick.

"Well, God be praised for the change!" said the bride-

groom at last. "I do not greatly regret that God sent you to me, and I promise you on my word to make you a good husband!"

"No, no," she said, weeping. "You are not my husband. I wish to go back to him to whom my father gave me."

"That shall not be," said he. "I married you in the holy church, and you cannot deny it. You are, and you will remain, my wife; and be content, for you are very lucky. I have, thank God, riches enough, of which you shall be the lady and mistress, and you will be very comfortable."

He, and the others who were there, talked her over till at last she consented. So they had a light breakfast together, and then went to bed, and the old man did the best he knew how.

But let us return to the old woman and the young man.

When she found herself in the house, she was in a great rage, and said:

"What am I doing here? Why do you not take me either to my own house, or to the house of my husband?"

The bridegroom, when he saw the old woman, and heard her speak, was much surprised, and so were his father and mother, and all who were there assembled. Then came out the father and mother, who knew the old woman, and the father spoke to his son, and said:

"My son, they have given you the wife of some one else, and it is to be supposed he has your wife. It is all the fault of our curé, who sees so badly, and—God help me—I was so far away from you when you were married that I never perceived the change."

"What must I do?" asked the bridegroom.

"Upon my word," said his father, "I do not well know,

but I greatly doubt if you can have any other wife than this."

"St. John!" said the old woman. "I will not have him. I do not care for such a sorry fellow! I should be very happy, should I not? with a young fellow who did not care for me and would spend all my money, and if I ventured to say a word would give me a crack on the head. Go away! go away! and fetch your wife, and let me go where I ought to be."

"By Our Lady!" said the bridegroom, "if I can get her back, I would rather have her than you, however poor she may be; but if I cannot obtain her, you will not go."

His father and some of his relations went to the house where the old woman wished to be, and found the company breakfasting well, and preparing the caudle for the bride and bridegroom.

The father stated the case, but the others replied:

"You come too late; each must keep what he has; the master of the house is content with the wife that God has given him; he wedded her, and he does not want any other. And do not complain, for you would never have been so fortunate as to get your daughter married so well; now you will all be rich."

The father returned home, and reported the answer he had, at which the old woman was in a great rage.

"Indeed!" she said, "am I to be deceived in this manner? By God, the matter shall not rest here; justice shall be done me!"

If the old woman was displeased, as much, or more, was the young man, who was deprived of his lady-love. Still, he might have overlooked that if he could have had the old woman, and all her money, but it was no

good, she made herself so disagreeable that he was obliged to let her return home.

So he was advised to summon her before the Bishop of Cambrai; and she also summoned the old man who had married the young woman, and a great lawsuit began, judgment in which is not given yet, so I can tell you no more about it.

LIV

THE RIGHT MOMENT

By MAHIOT D'AUGESNES

Of a damsel of Maubeuge who gave herself up to a waggoner, and refused many noble lovers; and of the reply that she made to a noble knight because he reproached her for this—as you will hear.

A noble knight of Flanders—young, lusty, and good jouster, dancer, and singer, was once living in the county of Hainault with another noble knight of the same rank then living there, though he had a fine residence in Flanders. Love—as often happens—was the cause that he remained there, for he was much smitten by a damsel of Maubeuge, and God knows what he did for her; often giving jousts, masquerades, banquets, and whatever else was possible, and that he thought would please his mistress.

He was to some extent in her good graces for a time, but not so much as he wished to be. His friend, the knight of Hainault, who knew of his love affair, did all he could to assist him, and it was not his fault that his friend did not succeed better. But why make a long story? The good knight of Flanders, do all he would, and his friend also, could never obtain from the lady the supreme favour, but found her still harsh and unkind.

At last he was compelled to return to Flanders; so he took leave of his mistress, and left his friend there, and

promised that if he did not return shortly he would often write to her, and give news about himself; and she promised the same on her side.

Now it came to pass that a few days after the knight had returned to Flanders, that the lady wished to go on a pilgrimage, and made her arrangements accordingly.

And when the carriage was in front of her house, and the waggoner, who was a lusty fellow, strong and active, in it, preparing it for her, that she threw a cushion on his head, which caused him to fall on his hands and knees, at which she laughed loud and long.

"By God, mademoiselle, you made me fall, but I will have my revenge, and before night I will make you tumble."

"You would not be so unkind," she replied, and so saying, she took another cushion, and when the waggoner was off his guard, she knocked him down again, and then laughed more heartily than ever.

"What is this, mademoiselle?" cried the waggoner. "Do you want to hurt me? I swear that if I were near you I would take my revenge at once."

"What would you do?" said she.

"If I were up there I would show you," he replied.

"You would do miracles—to hear you talk; but you would never dare to come."

"No?" said he. "You shall see."

He jumped out of the vehicle, entered the house, and ran upstairs, where he found the damsel in her petticoat, and as happy as she could be. He at once began to assail her, and—to cut matters short—she was not sorry to let him take what she could not in honour have given him.

At the end of the appointed time she brought forth a fine little waggoner. The matter was not so secret but

what the knight of Hainault heard of it, and was much surprised.

He wrote in haste, and sent the letter by a messenger to his friend in Flanders, to say that his mistress had had a child with the help of a waggoner.

You may guess that the other was much surprised at the news, and he quickly came to Hainault to his friend, and begged of him to come and see his mistress and upbraid her with her misdeeds.

Although she was keeping herself concealed at the time, the two knights found means to come to her. She was much ashamed and vexed to see them, as she well knew she would hear nothing pleasant from them, but she plucked up her courage and put on the best countenance she could.

They began by talking of various matters; and then the good knight of Flanders began his tirade and called her all the names he could think of.

"You are," he said, "the most shameful and depraved woman in the world, and you have shown the wickedness of your heart by abandoning yourself to a low villain of a waggoner: although many noble persons offered you their services and you refused them all. For my own part, you know what I did to gain your love, and was I not more deserving of reward than a rascally waggoner who never did anything for you?"

"I beg of you, monsieur," she replied, "to say no more about it—what is done cannot be undone—but I tell you plainly that if you had come at the moment when the waggoner did, that I would have done for you what I did for him."

"Is that so?" he said. "By St. John! he came at a

lucky moment! Devil take it! why was I not so fortunate as to know the right time to come?"

"Truly," she said, "he came just at the moment when he ought to have come."

"Oh, go to the devil!" he cried, "your moments, and you, and your waggoner as well."

And with that he left, and his friend followed him, and they never had anything more to do with her,—and for a very good reason.

LV

A CURE FOR THE PLAGUE

By MONSEIGNEUR DE VILLIERS

Of a girl who was ill of the plague and caused the death of three men who lay with her, and how the fourth was saved, and she also.

In the year of the pardons of Rome¹ just past, the plague was so great and terrible in Dauphiné that the greater part of the better-class people left the country.

At that time a fair young damsel felt herself stricken with the malady, and at once repaired to a neighbour, a woman of good condition, and rather old, and related her piteous condition.

The neighbour, who was a wise and prudent woman, was not frightened at what the girl told her, and had even sufficient courage and assurance to comfort her with words, and what little she could do in the way of medicine.

“Alas!” said the young girl who was sick, “my good neighbour, I greatly grieve that I must now leave the world and all the happiness and amusements I have long enjoyed! But, by my oath! and between ourselves, my greatest sorrow is that I must die before I have known and tasted the good things of this world; such and such young men have often solicited me, and I bluntly refused them, for which I am now sorry; and if I die I shall never have another chance to let a man show me

¹ The great Jubilee of 1450.

how to lose my maidenhead. They have told me that it is so pleasant and good, that I sorrow for my fair and tender body, which must rot without having had this much desired pleasure. And, to tell the truth, my good neighbour, it seems to me that if I once tasted this delight before my death, my end would be easier—I should die more easily, and with less regret. And, what is more, my heart is so set upon this that it might be medicine to me, and the cause of my cure.”

“Would to God!” said the old woman, “that nothing else were needed; you would be soon cured it seems to me, for—thank God—our town is not yet so destitute of men that we cannot find a good fellow to do this job for you.”

“My good neighbour,” said the young girl, “I would beg of you to go to such an one”—whom she named, who was a fine gentleman, and who had formerly been in love with her—“and tell him to come here and speak to me.”

The old woman set out, and found the gentleman, whom she sent to the house. As soon as he came there, the young girl, who, on account of her disease had a high colour, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him twenty times. The young man, more joyful than ever to find her whom he had so much loved abandon herself to him, seized her without more ado, and showed her that which she so much desired to know.

She was not ashamed to beg and pray him to continue as he had commenced; and, in short, she made him begin again so often that he could do no more. When she saw that, as she had not yet had her fill, she was bold enough to say:

“My friend, you have often beseeched for that which

I ask you now. You have done all that in you is, I know well. Nevertheless, I know that I have not all I want, and I am sure that I cannot live unless some one else comes and does to me what you have done, and therefore I beg of you, if you value my life, to go to such an one and bring him hither."

"It is true, my dear, that I know well he will do what you want."

The gentleman was much astonished at the request; nevertheless, though he had worked till he could do no more, he went off and found his companion, and brought him to her, and he soon set to work as the other had done.

When he was played out as his friend had been, she was not ashamed to ask him, as she had done the first, to bring to her another gentleman, and he did so.

This made three with whom she had fought a love battle and defeated them all; but you must know that the first gentleman felt ill, and stricken with the plague, as soon as he had sent his friend to take his place; so he hastened to the priest, and confessed as best he could, and then died in the priest's arms.

His friend also, the second comer, as soon as he had given up his place to the third, felt very ill, and asked everywhere after the one who was already dead. He met the priest, weeping and exhibiting great grief, who told him of the death of his friend.

"Ah, monsieur le curé, I am stricken as he was; hear my confession."

The curé, in a great fright, made haste to hear his confession, and, when that was finished, the gentleman, though within two hours of his end, went to her from whom he and his friend had taken the contagion, and

found with her the man he had fetched, and said to her:

“Cursed woman! you have killed me and my friend also. You ought to be burned to death! Nevertheless I pardon you, and may God pardon you! You have the plague, and have given it to my friend, who died in the priest’s arms, and I shall soon follow him.” With that he left, and died an hour later in his own house.

The third gentleman, who had run the same risks as his companions, who were both dead, did not feel very safe. Nevertheless, he took courage, and cast aside all fear, and bethought him that he had often been in perils and dangerous battles before, and went to the father and mother of the girl who had killed his two companions, and told them that their daughter was ill, and that they must take care of her. That being done, he so conducted himself that he escaped the danger of which his two friends had died.

Now you must know that when this slayer of men was brought back to her father’s house, whilst they were making a bed ready in which she could repose and sweat, she sent secretly for the son of a shoemaker, a neighbour, and had him brought to her father’s stable, where she made him work as she had done the others, but he did not live four hours after.

She was put to bed, and they made her sweat greatly. And soon there appeared upon her body four buboes, of which she was afterwards cured. And I believe that you will find her now amongst the prostitutes at Avignon, Vienne, Valence, or some other place in Dauphiné.

And the doctors said that she had escaped death because she had tasted the joys of this life; which is a notable and true example to many young girls to never refuse a good thing when it comes in their way.

LVI

THE WOMAN, THE PRIEST, THE SERVANT, AND THE WOLF

By MONSEIGNEUR DE VILLIERS

Of a gentleman who caught, in a trap that he laid, his wife, the priest, her maid, and a wolf; and burned them all alive, because his wife committed adultery with the priest.

In a town in this kingdom, in the duchy of Auvergne, there formerly lived a gentleman, who, to his misfortune, had a very pretty young wife.

This damsel was acquainted with a priest, a neighbour, who lived half a league off, and they were so neighbourly together that the good priest took the gentleman's place whenever he was absent.

And this damsel had a waiting-maid who was acquainted with all their doings, and often carried messages to the priest, and advised him of the place and hour when he could safely come to her mistress.

The matter was not so well hid as the lovers would have liked, for a gentleman, who was a near relative of him to whom this dishonour was done, was informed of the affair, and told the person most concerned all that he knew.

You may fancy that the good gentleman, when he heard that in his absence his wife was helped by the priest, was not overpleased, and if it had not been for

his cousin would have taken terrible vengeance as soon as he heard the news; but consented to put it off until he had taken them both in the act.

He and his cousin arranged to go on a pilgrimage, four or six leagues from home, and take his wife and the priest, in order to ascertain how they behaved towards each other.

As they were returning from this pilgrimage, during which the curé had made love as he best could,—that is to say by glances and other little devices—the husband caused himself to be sent for by a messenger he had instructed, to come at once to a lord of that country.

He pretended to be very vexed, and to leave with much regret,—nevertheless, since the lord had sent for him he could not disobey. So he went his way, and his cousin, the other gentleman, said that he would keep him company, as that was his way to return home.

The priest and the lady much rejoiced to hear this news; they consulted together and decided that the priest should take leave and quit the house, in order that none of the people there might suspect him, and about midnight he would return to the lady, as he was accustomed. No sooner was this determined on than the priest said farewell, and left the house.

Now you must know that the husband and his relative were hidden in a gorge through which the priest would have to pass, and could neither go or return any other way, without going out of the right road.

They saw the priest pass, and judged that he would return that night—as indeed was his intention. They let him pass without saying a word, and then prepared a large pitfall, with the help of some peasants who aided them in the task. The trap was quickly and well made,

and it was not long before a wolf, passing that way, fell into the pit.

Soon after came the priest, clad in a short gown, and with a curtle axe hung round his neck; and when he came to where the pitfall had been dug, he fell into it on the wolf, at which he was much alarmed, and the wolf, who was down there first, was as much afraid of the priest as the priest was of it.

When the two gentlemen saw the priest lodged along with the wolf, they were much delighted, and he who was most concerned, declared that the priest should never come out alive, for he would kill him there. The other blamed him for this, and did not wish the priest killed, and was of opinion they should rather cut off his genitals; but the husband wanted him killed, and this discussion lasted for a long time, while they were awaiting the dawn, when they could see clearly.

Whilst they were thus waiting, the lady, who expected the priest, and did not know why he tarried so long, sent her servant-maid in order to make him hurry.

The maid, whilst on her road to the curé's house, fell into the trap with the wolf and the curé. She was much astonished to find herself in such company.

"Alas! said the priest, "I am lost. We have been found out, and some one has laid this trap for us."

The husband and his cousin, who heard and saw all, were both as pleased as they could be; and they felt as sure as though the Holy Spirit had revealed it to them, that the mistress would follow the maid, for they had heard the maid say that her mistress had sent her to the priest to know why he had failed to come at the hour agreed upon between them.

The mistress, finding that neither the curé or the maid

came, and that dawn was approaching, suspected that there was something, and that she should find them in a little wood there was on the road—which was where the trap was laid—and determined to go there and try and find out if there was any news.

She walked along towards the priest's house, and when she came to the spot where the trap was laid, she tumbled in along with the others.

When they found themselves all assembled, it need not be said that they were much astonished, and each did his or her utmost to get out of the pit, but it was no good, and they looked upon themselves as being as good as dead, as well as dishonoured.

Then the two prime movers in the affair—that is to say the husband of the lady and his cousin—came to the edge of the pit, and saluted the company, and told them to be comfortable, and asked them if they were ready for breakfast.

The husband, who was anxious for his revenge, managed to send his cousin to look after their horses, which were at a house near by, and when he had got rid of him, he made all the haste he could, and threw a quantity of brushwood into the pit, and set it on fire, and burned them all—wife, priest, waiting-woman and wolf.

After that he left that part of the country, and went to the King to ask his pardon, which he easily obtained.

And some say that the King remarked that it was a pity the poor wolf should have been burned alive for the faults of the others.

LVII

THE OBLIGING BROTHER

By MONSEIGNEUR DE VILLIERS

Of a damsel who married a shepherd, and how the marriage was arranged, and what a gentleman, the brother of the damsel, said.

As you are all ready to listen to me, and no one comes forward at the present moment to continue this glorious and edifying book of a Hundred Stories, I will relate an instance which happened formerly in Dauphiné, fit to be included in the number of the said novels.

A gentleman who lived in Dauphiné had in his house a sister, aged about eighteen or twenty, who was a companion to his wife, who loved her dearly, so that they agreed together like two sisters.

It happened that this gentleman was bidden to the house of a neighbour, who lived a couple of short leagues away, to visit him, and took with him his wife and sister. They went, and God knows how cordially they were received.

The wife of the neighbour who invited them took the wife and sister of the said gentleman for a walk after supper, talking of various matters, and they came to the hut of the shepherd, which was near a large and fine park in which the sheep were kept, and found there the chief shepherd looking after his flock. And—as women will—they enquired about many and various things, and

amongst others they asked if he was not cold in his cottage? He replied he was not, and that he was more comfortable in his hut than they were in their glazed, matted, and well-floored chambers.

They talked also of other matters, and some of their phrases had a bawdy meaning; and the worthy shepherd, who was neither a fool nor a blockhead, swore to them that he was prepared to undertake to do the job eight or nine times in one night.

The sister of our gentleman cast amorous glances at the shepherd when she heard this, and did not fail to tell him, when she found a fitting opportunity, that he had made an impression on her, and that he was to come to see her at her brother's house, and that she would make him welcome.

The shepherd, who saw she was a pretty girl, was not a little pleased at this news, and promised to come and see her. And, in short, he did as he had promised, and at the hour arranged between his lady-love and him was in front of her window; and though it was a high and dangerous ascent, nevertheless he accomplished it by means of a cord which she let down, and a vine there was there, and was soon in her chamber, where, it need not be said, he was heartily welcomed.

He showed that it was no empty boast he had made, for before daylight the stag had eight horns, at which the lady was greatly pleased. And you must know that before the shepherd could come to the lady, he had to walk two leagues, and swim the broad river Rhone, which was close to the house where his mistress lived; and when day came he had to recross the Rhone, and return to his sheepfold; and he continued to do this for a long time without being discovered.

During this time many gentlemen of that country demanded the hand of this damsel turned shepherdess, in marriage, but not one of them was to her taste; at which her brother was not best pleased, and said so many times, but she was always well provided with answers and excuses. She informed her lover, the shepherd, of all this, and one night she promised him that, if he wished, she would never have any other husband but him. He replied that he desired nothing better.

"But it can never be," he said; "on account of your brother and your other friends."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," she said, "let me manage as I like and it will be all right."

So they plighted troth to one another. But soon after that there came a gentleman to make a last request for the hand of the lady shepherdess, and who said he would marry her if she were only dressed in the manner becoming her station without any other portion. Her brother would have willingly listened to this demand, and tried to persuade his sister to give her consent, pointing out to her what her duty was in such a case; but he could not succeed, at which he was much displeased.

When she saw that he was angry with her, she took him on one side, and said:

"Brother, you have long lectured me, and pressed me to marry such and such a man, and I would never consent. Now I beg of you not to be angry with or bear any resentment towards me, and I will tell you what has prevented my acceding to any of these requests, if you will promise not to be still more enraged against me."

Her brother willingly promised. When she had ob-

tained this assurance, she told him that she was as good as married already, and that as long as she lived she would never have for husband any other man than the one she would show him that night if he wished.

"I should much like to see him," replied her brother, "but who is he?"

"You will see in good time," she said.

At the accustomed hour the shepherd came, and climbed to the lady's chamber, God knows how wet from having crossed the river. The brother looked at him, and saw it was his neighbour's shepherd, and was in no small degree astonished; and still more so was the shepherd, who would have fled when he saw him.

"Stay! Stay!" said the gentleman, "there is nothing to fear."

"Is this," he added turning to his sister, "the man of whom you spoke to me?"

"Yes, truly, brother," said he.

"Then make a good fire for him to warm himself," said the gentleman, "for he much needs it. And do you regard him as your husband; and truly you are not wrong to like him, for he has run great dangers for love of you. And since the matter has gone so far, and you have the courage to take him for a husband, never mind me, and cursed be he who does not hurry on the marriage."

"Amen!" she said. "It shall be to-morrow, if you wish."

"I do wish," he replied; then turning to the shepherd.

"What do you say?"

"Whatever you wish."

"There is nothing else for it then," said the gentle-

man. "You are, and shall be, my brother-in-law. Not so long ago our family was not noble; so I may well have a shepherd for a brother-in-law."

To cut the story short, the gentleman consented to the marriage of his sister to the shepherd; and it was performed, and they both continued to live in his house, though it was much talked about throughout the country.

And when he was in some place where the affair was being talked about, and surprise was expressed that he had not killed or beaten the shepherd, the gentleman replied that he would never harm one whom his sister loved; and that he would rather have for a brother-in-law, a shepherd his sister liked, than some great man she did not like.

All this was said as a joke, and sportingly; for he was, and has always been, a courteous and pleasant gentleman, and liked not to hear his sister's name bandied about, even amongst his friends and boon companions.

LVIII

SCORN FOR SCORN

By MONSEIGNEUR

Of two comrades who wished to make their mistresses better inclined towards them, and so indulged in debauchery, and said, that as after that their mistresses still scorned them, that they too must have played at the same game—as you will hear.

I knew, in the time of my green and virtuous youth, two gentlemen, good comrades, accomplished and provided with every quality to be praised in a virtuous gentleman. They were friends, and were alike each other in every respect, not only bodily, but as regarded their clothes, their servants, and their horses.

It happened that they fell in love with two fair young damsels of good family and gracious, and they did for these fair ladies' sake a hundred thousand little courtesies. Their vows were listened to—but nothing more. Perhaps the damsels had lovers already, or did not wish to have a love affair on their hands, for in truth the youths were both good fellows, such as many a noble lady would have liked for a lover.

Be that as it may, they could not win their ladies' love, which caused them to pass many nights in God knows what sorrow, now cursing fortune, now love, and most often their mistresses for being so unkind. Whilst they were suffering this rage and grief, one of them said one day to his friend:

"We can see with half an eye that our mistresses do not care for us, and yet we more madly desire them than ever, and the more scorn and harshness they show us the more we desire to please, serve and obey them! Upon my word this seems to me the height of folly. Let us, I pray you, think no more of them than they do of us, and you will see that when they know that, it will be their turn to seek and importune us."

"Ah!" said the other, "very good advice, no doubt, but how can it be carried out?"

"I have found the means," said the first. "I have always heard it said, and Ovid puts it in his book, 'The Remedy of Love,' that to do—you know what—much and often, makes you forget or think little of the person with whom you are in love. I will tell you what we will do. We will take home with us a couple of nice young 'cousins'¹ and we will sleep with them, and commit every folly with them that our strength will permit, and then we will go and see our ladies, and the devil is in it if they do not then care for us."

The other agreed, and the proposal was carried out, and each took home a nice wench. And after that they went to a great feast where their ladies were, and they flaunted in front of the damsels, chattering carelessly here and there, and seeming to say in a hundred thousand ways, "We do not care for you," believing that, as they had devised, their mistresses would be displeased and would try to make their lovers return to their allegiance.

But it happened quite otherwise, for if the youths appeared to think but little of the ladies, they, on the other hand, showed openly that they cared nothing for

¹ Prostitutes. The word is doubtless derived from coussin.

the young men, which the latter perceived, and were much amazed at. The one said to his friend:

“Do you know what is the matter? Morbleu! our mistresses have done exactly what we have done. Do you not see how scornful they are? They carry themselves exactly as we do—and, believe me, for the very same reason. They have each chosen a paramour and indulged in folly to the utmost. Devil take the bitches! Let us leave them alone!”

“By my oath!” replied the other, “I believe it is as you say. I never expected to find them like this.”

So the two friends thought that their mistresses had done the same as they had done themselves, because the damsels took no more heed of them than they did of the damsels—which may not have been true, but was not difficult to believe.

LIX

THE SICK LOVER

By PONCELET

*Of a lord who pretended to be sick in order that he might lie with the servant maid, with whom his wife found him.*¹

In the town of St. Omer there lived formerly a good fellow, sergeant to the king, who was married to a good and chaste woman, who had, by a former marriage, a son grown up and married.

This good fellow, notwithstanding that he had a virtuous and prudent wife, made love day and night with whomsoever he had a chance, and as often as possible. And as in winter it was often inconvenient to go far to seek for his love affairs, he bethought himself and reflected that he need not leave home for a mistress, for that his wife's maid was a very pretty, young and well-mannered girl, and he might manage to become her lover.

In short, by gifts and promises, he obtained the girl's permission to do whatever he wished, but there were difficulties in the way, for his wife, knowing her husband's character, always kept an eye upon him.

Nevertheless, Cupid, who always comes to the help of his true followers, inspired his good and loyal worshipper

¹ Stories 59, 60 and 61, are all by Poncelet, or Pourcelet, one of the Council of the Duke of Burgundy.

with an idea by which he could accomplish his ends; for he pretended to be very sick of a chill, and said to his wife:

"My dear helpmate, come here! I am as ill as I can be; I must go to bed, and I beg of you to make all the servants go to bed, too, in order that there may be no noise or disturbance, and then come to our chamber."

The worthy woman, who was much vexed at her husband's illness, did as she was ordered, and took fair sheets and warmed them, and put them over her husband after he was in bed. And when he had been well warmed for a long time, he said:

"My dear, that will suffice. I am well enough now, thanks be to God and to you for the trouble you have taken; and I beg of you to come and lie down by my side."

She only desired her husband's health and repose, and did as she was desired, and went to sleep as quickly as possible. As soon as he perceived she was asleep he slipped quietly out of bed and went to the servant's bed, where he was well received, and broke so many lances that he was tired and worn out, and dropped off to sleep in her fair arms.

It often happens that when we go to bed vexed or melancholy we are easily awakened,—indeed that may be the cause of our waking, and so it happened to the wife. And as she took great care of her husband, she put out her hand to touch him, and discovered that he was not in the bed; and on feeling the pillow and the place where he had been lying, she found that they were cold, and that he had been out of bed a long time.

Then, in despair, she jumped out of bed and put on a chemise and a petticoat, and said to herself:

"Idle and worthless wretch that you are, you have much to reproach yourself with, for by your neglect you have let your husband die. Alas! why did I come to bed to-night and fall asleep; O Virgin Mary! I pray that nothing has happened to him through my fault, or I shall deem myself guilty of his death."

After these regrets and lamentations she went off to seek a light, and in order that the servant-maid might help her to find her lost husband, she went to her room to arouse her, and there found the happy pair asleep, locked in each other's arms, and it seemed that they must have worked well that night, for they were not awakened by her coming into the room or by the light she carried.

She was glad that her husband was not as ill as she had feared or expected, and went to seek her children and all the servants of the household and brought them to see the couple, and asked them in a low voice, who that was in the maid's bed, sleeping with her? And the children replied that it was their father, and the servants that it was their master. Then she led them out, and made them go to bed again, for it was too early to get up, and she also went back to bed, but did not sleep again till it was time to rise.

Soon after she had left the lovers, they woke up, and took leave of each other amorously. The master returned to bed, to his wife's side, without saying a word, nor did she, but pretended to be asleep, at which he was very glad, thinking that she knew nothing of his adventure, for he greatly feared her, both for his peace and that of the girl. So he slept soundly; and his wife, as soon as it was time to get up, rose, and to please her husband, and give him something comforting after the laxa-

tive medicine that he had taken that night, woke up her servants, and called her maid, and told her to kill the two fattest capons in the fowl-house, and prepare them nicely, and then go to the butcher and buy the best bit of beef she could procure, and put it in water to make a good soup, as she well knew how, for she was a capital cook.

The girl, who heartily desired to please her mistress and her master, the one for love and the other from fear, said that she would willingly do all that was commanded.

Then the wife went to Mass, and on her return passed by the house of her son, of whom I have spoken, and asked him to come and dine with her husband, and to bring with him three or four good fellows whom she named, and whom she and her husband wished invited.

Then she returned home to see after the dinner, and found that her husband had gone to church. Meanwhile her son had gone round to invite the guests his mother had named, and who were the greatest jokers in St. Omer.

The good man came back from Mass, and embraced his wife, and she did the same to him, and, in order that he should not suspect anything, she said that she rejoiced at his recovery, for which he thanked her, and said:

"Indeed I am in fairly good health, my dear, after last night, and I think I have a very good appetite, so we will have dinner at once if you like."

She replied: "I am very glad to hear it, but you must wait a little till the dinner is ready; and until such and such people, whom I have invited to dine with you, have arrived."

"Invited!" said he, "and for what reason? I do not care about them and would rather they stayed where

they are; for they jest at everything, and if they know I have been ill they will tease me about it. At least, my dear, let me beg of you to say nothing about it. And there is another thing—what will they eat?”

She said he need not trouble about that; they would have enough to eat, for she had dressed the two best capons, as well as a fine piece of beef, and all in his honour, at which he was very glad and said it was well done.

Soon after came those who had been invited, and the woman's son. And when all was ready, they sat at the table and made good cheer, especially the host, and they drank often one to another.

The host said to his stepson:

“John, my friend, drink with your mother, and enjoy yourself.”

And he replied that he would willingly do so; and when he drank to his mother, the maid, who was waiting at table, came into the room.

Then the wife called her, and said:

“Come here, my dear friend and companion! drink to me, and I will pledge thee.”

“Friend and companion!” said the host. “What is the meaning of all this affection? What mischief is brewing now? This is something new!”

“Indeed, she is truly my honest and trusted companion! Why do you wonder at that?”

“Oh, the devil, Joan! take care what you say! Any one would think there was something between her and me.”

“And why should they not?” she said. “Did I not find you last night lying in her bed, and sleeping in her arms?”

"In her bed?" he said.

"Truly, yes," she replied.

"On my honour, gentlemen, it is not true, and she only says so to spite me, and bring shame on the poor girl, for she never saw me there."

"The devil I did not!" she replied. "You shall hear the statement again from those of your own household."

With that she called the children, and the servants who were standing there, and asked them if they had not seen their father lying with the maid, and they answered, yes.

"You lie, you naughty boys," replied their father. "Your mother told you to say it."

"Begging your pardon, father, we saw you there; and so did the servants."

"Is that so?" asked the lady of the servants.

"That is quite true," they replied.

Then all who were present laughed loudly, and teased him terribly, for his wife related all about his pretended illness, and what he had done, and how she had prepared the dinner and invited his friends in order to make the story known, at which he was so ashamed that he hardly dared hold up his head, and did not know what to reply except to say:

"Go on! you are all against me, so I will hold my tongue and let you have your own way, for I can't contend against the lot of you."

Afterwards he ordered the table to be removed, and when grace was said, he called his stepson and whispered to him:

"John, my friend, although the others accuse me, I know that you believe me. See how much is owing to that poor girl, and pay her so liberally that she will have

no cause to complain, and send her away; for I know well that your mother will never permit her to stay in the house."

The stepson went and did as he was ordered; then he returned to the friends whom he had brought, whom he found talking to his mother, then they thanked her for their entertainment, and took leave and went.

The husband and wife remained at home, and it is to be supposed that he did not hear the last of it for some time. For the poor husband did not drain his cup of bitterness at the dinner-table, but found that the proverb about dogs, hawks, war and love, which says, "Every pleasure has a thousand sorrows," is true. But none should run the risk if they are not prepared to pay the penalty. Thus did it happen that the adventure of this worthy fellow ended in the manner related.

LX

THREE VERY MINOR BROTHERS

By PONCELET

*Of three women of Malines, who were acquainted with three cordeliers, and had their heads shaved, and donned the gown that they might not be recognised, and how it was made known.*¹

Formerly there were in the town of Malines three damsels, the wives of three burghers of the town,—rich, powerful, and of good position, who were in love with three Minor Friars; and to more secretly and covertly manage their amours under the cloak of religion, they rose every day an hour or two before dawn, and when it appeared a fit time to go and see their lovers, they told their husbands they were going to matins to the first Mass.

Owing to the great pleasure that they took in these exercises and the monks also, it often happened that it was broad daylight, and they could not leave the convent without being perceived by the other monks. Therefore, fearing the great perils and inconveniences which might arise, they arranged between them that each should wear a monk's gown, and have a tonsure made on her head, as though they belonged to the convent. So finally one day that they were in the convent, and whilst their husbands suspected nothing of it, a

¹ From an old fabliau ("Frère Denise, cordelier"), and is to be found in the "Heptameron," the "Apologie pour Herodote," etc.

barber,—that is to say a monk belonging to the convent—was sent for secretly to the cells of the three brothers, and he cut a tonsure on the head of each.

And when the time came to leave, they put on the friars' gowns with which they were provided, and in that state returned to their respective homes, and undressed, and left their disguise with certain discreet matrons, and then returned to their husbands; and this continued for a long while, without any person being aware of it.

But since it would have been a great pity that such excessive devotion should not be known, fortune so willed that as on a certain day one of these ladies was on her road to the accustomed haunt, her trick was discovered, and she was caught in her disguise by her husband, who had followed her, and who said:

“Good brother, I am glad to have met you! I would beg of you to return to my house, for I have many things to say to you,” and with that he took her back, at which she hardly felt joyful.

When they were in the house, the husband said, in a joking manner:

“My dear helpmate, can you swear on your honour that it is true piety, which in the middle of winter, causes you to don the habit of St. Francis and have your head shaved like the good monks? Tell me the name of your confessor, or by St. Francis you shall suffer for it,”—and he pretended to draw his dagger.

The poor woman threw herself on her knees, and cried:

“Have mercy upon me, husband! for I have been led astray by bad companions! I know that you could kill me if you liked, and that I have not behaved as I should,

but I am not the only one the monks have led astray, and, if you promise that you will do nothing to me, I will tell you all."

To this her husband agreed; and then she told him how she often went to the monastery with two of her cronies who were in love with two of the monks, and they often breakfasted together in the monks' cells. "A third monk was in love with me," she continued, "and made such humble and impassioned requests to me that I could not excuse myself, and by the instigation and example of my companions, I did as they did, they all saying that we should have a good time together, and no one would know about it."

Then the husband demanded the names of her female friends, and she told him. He was acquainted with their husbands, and they had often eaten and drunk together. Finally, he asked who was the barber, and the names of the three monks.

The good husband, after considering all things, and moved by the piteous groans and sad regrets of his wife, said:

"Take care that you tell no one that you have spoken to me on this matter, and I promise you that I will do you no harm."

She promised that she would do whatever he wished. With that he went away at once, and invited to dinner the two husbands and their wives, the three Cordeliers, and the barber, and they all promised to come.

The next day they all came, and sat at table, and enjoyed themselves without expecting any bad news. After the table was removed, they had many joyous jests and devices to discover who should pay scot for all, and as they could not agree, the host said:

"Since we cannot agree as to who is to pay the reckoning, I will tell you what we will do. The one who has the baldest crown to his head shall pay—of course excluding these good monks, who pay nothing—at present."

To which they all agreed and were content that it should be thus, and that the barber should be the judge. And when all the men had shown their heads, the host said that they ought to look at their wives' heads.

It need not be asked if there were not some there present who felt their hearts sink within them. Without an instant's delay, the host uncovered his wife's head, and when he saw the tonsure he pretended to admire it greatly, pretending that he knew nothing about it, and said:

"We must see if the others are the same."

Then their husbands made them remove their head-dresses, and they were found to be tonsured like the first one, at which the men were not best pleased, notwithstanding that they laughed loudly, and declared that the question had been settled, and that it was for their wives to pay the reckoning.

But they wished to know how these tonsures came there, and the host, rejoicing to be able to divulge such a secret, related the whole affair, on condition that they would pardon their wives this time, after they had been witnesses of the penance the good monks were to undergo in their presence,—and to this both husbands agreed.

Then the host caused four or five sturdy varlets to come out of a chamber near by, and they, knowing what they had to do, seized the worthy monks and gave them as many blows as they could find room for on their

shoulders, and then turned them out of the house. The others remained for a certain space, and it is to be supposed that a good deal of conversation passed between them, but as it would take too long to recount, I pass it over here, for the sake of brevity.

LXI

CUCKOLDED—AND DUPED

By PONCELET

*Of a merchant who locked up in a bin his wife's lover, and she secretly put an ass there, which caused her husband to be covered with confusion.*¹

It happened once that in a large town of Hainault there lived a good merchant married to a worthy woman. He travelled much, to buy and sell his merchandise, and this caused his wife to have a lover in his absence, and this continued for a long time.

Nevertheless, the secret was at last discovered by a neighbour, who was a relative of the husband, and lived opposite the merchant's house, and who often saw a gallant enter the merchant's house at night and leave in the morning. Which matter was brought to the knowledge of the person to whose prejudice it was, by this neighbour.

The merchant was much vexed, nevertheless he thanked his relative and neighbour, and said that he would shortly see into the matter, and for that purpose would shut himself up one night in his neighbour's house, that he might see if anyone visited his wife.

Lastly, he pretended to start on a journey, and told his wife and his servants that he did not know when

¹ From an old fabliau ("Les Cheveux coupés"). Mr. Wright also credits Poncelet with No. 89.

he should return. He started in the early morning, but returned the same evening and, having left his horse at some house, came secretly to his cousin, and peeped through a little lattice, expecting to see that which would hardly have pleased him.

He waited till about nine o'clock, when the gallant, whom the damsel had informed that her husband was away, passed once or twice before his lady-love's house, and looked at the door to see if he might enter, but found it closed. He guessed that it was not yet time, and whilst he strolled about waiting, the good merchant, who thought that this was the man he wanted, came down, and went to his door, and said:

"Friend, the lady heard you, and as she is afraid that the master may come back, she sent me down to let you in, if you please."

The gallant, thinking it was the servant, followed him. The door was opened gently, and he was conducted into a chamber in which there was a large bin, which the merchant unlocked and made the young man enter, that he should not be discovered if the husband returned. "My mistress will come and talk to you and let you out," added the merchant, as he turned the key in the lock.

The gallant suffered all this for the sake of what was to follow, and because he believed that the other spoke the truth.

Then the merchant started off at once as quickly as he could, and went to the cousin and his wife, and said to them:

"The rat is caught; but now we must consider what to do."

The cousin, and more particularly his wife—for there

was no love lost between the two women—were very glad to hear this, and said that it would be best for him to show the gallant to all his wife's relations in order that they might know how she conducted herself.

This being determined on, the merchant went to the house of his wife's father and mother, and told them that if ever they wished to see their daughter alive they must come at once to his house.

They jumped up at once, and, whilst they were preparing, he also went off to two of her brothers and her sisters, and told them the same thing. Then he took them all to the cousin's house and related the whole history, and how the rat had been caught.

Now you must know what the gallant did in the bin all the time, until he was luckily released. The damsel, who wondered greatly that her lover did not come, went backwards and forwards to the door, to see if he were coming. The young man, who heard her pass close to him without ever speaking to him, began to thump with his fist on the side of the bin. The damsel heard it and was greatly frightened; nevertheless she asked who was there, and the gallant replied:

"Alas, my dearest love, I am dying here of heat and doubt, for I am much surprised that I have been shut in here, and that no one has yet come to me."

"Virgin Mary! who can have put you there, my dear?"

"By my oath I know not," he replied; "but your varlet came to me and told me that you had asked him to bring me into the house, and that I was to get into this bin, that the husband might not find me if by chance he should come back to-night."

"Ah!" said she, "by my life that must have been my

husband. I am a lost woman; and our secret has been discovered."

"Do you know what is to be done?" he said. "In the first place you must let me out, or I will break everything, for I can no longer endure being shut up."

"By my oath!" said the damsel, "I have not the key; and if you break through I am undone, for my husband will say that I did it to save you."

Finally, the damsel searched about, and found a lot of old keys, amongst which was one that delivered the poor captive. As soon as he was out, he tumbled the lady, to show her what a grudge he had against her, which she bore patiently. After that her lover would have left her, but the damsel hung round his neck, and told him that if he went away like that she would be as much dishonoured as though he had broken out of the bin.

"What is to be done then?" said the gallant.

"We must put something there for my husband to find, or he will think that I have let you out."

"And what shall we put there?" asked the lover. "For it is time for me to go."

"We have in the stable," she said, "an ass, that we will put in if you will help me."

"Certainly, I will," he answered.

The ass was driven into the bin, and it was locked again, and then her lover took leave of her with a sweet kiss, and left by a back-door, whilst the damsel quickly got into bed.

Whilst these things were happening, her husband had assembled all his wife's relatives, and brought them to his cousin's house, as has been said, where he informed

them of what he had done, and how he had caught the gallant and had him under lock and key.

"And in order that you shall not say," he added, "that I blame your daughter without cause, you shall both see and touch the scoundrel who has done us this dishonour, and I beg that he may be killed before he can get away."

Every one present declared that it should be so.

"And then," said the merchant, "I will send you back your daughter for such as she is."

With that they all accompanied him, though sorrowing much at the news, and they took with them torches and flambeaux, so as to be better able to search, and that nothing should escape them.

They knocked so loudly that the damsel came before any one else in the house was awakened, and opened the door, and when they had come in, she abused her husband, her father, her mother, and the others, and declared that she wondered greatly what could have brought them all at that hour of the night. At these words her husband stepped forward, and gave her a good buffet, and said:

"You shall know soon enough, false such and such that you are."

"Ah! take care what you say. Was it for that you brought my father and mother here?"

"Yes," said the mother, "false wench that you are! We will drag forth your paramour directly."

And her sisters said:

"By God, sister, you did not learn at home to behave like this."

"Sisters," she replied, "by all the saints of Rome I

have done nothing that a good woman should not do. I should like to see any one prove the contrary."

"You lie!" said her husband. "I can prove it at once, and the rascal shall be killed in your presence. Up quickly! and open me this bin."

"I?" she replied. "In truth I think you must be dreaming, or out of your senses, for you know well that I have never had the key, but that it hangs at your belt along with the others, ever since the time that you locked up your goods. If you want to open it, open it. But I pray to God that, as truly as I have never kept company with whoever is in that box, that He will deliver me, to my great joy, and that the evil spite that you have against me may be clearly proved and demonstrated—and I have full hope and confidence that it will be so."

"And I hope," said her husband, addressing the crowd, "that you will see her on her knees, weeping and groaning, and squalling like a drenched cat. She would deceive anybody who was fool enough to believe her, but I have suspected her for a long time past. Now I am going to unlock the bin, and I beg you, gentlemen, to lay hands on the scoundrel, that he escape us not, for he is strong and bold."

"Have no fear!" they cried in chorus. "We will give a good account of him."

With that they drew their swords and brandished their hammers to knock down the poor lover, and they shouted to him:

"Confess your sins! for you will never have a priest nearer you."

The mother and sisters, not wishing to witness the

murder, drew on one side, and then the good man opened the bin, and as soon as the ass saw the light, it began to bray so hideously that the boldest person there was affrighted.

And when they saw that it was an ass, and that they had been befooled, they cursed the merchant, and showered more abuse on him than ever St. Peter had praise, and even the women inveighed against him. In fact, if he had not fled, his wife's brothers would have killed him in revenge for the blame and dishonour he had wrongly tried to bring on the family.

There was such ado between him and his wife's family that peace had to be made between them by the chief burghers of the town, and this was not effected without much trouble, and many demands on the part of her friends, and many strict promises on his part. But ever after that he was all kindness and consideration, and never did a man conduct himself better to his wife than he did all his life; and thus they passed their days together.

LXII

THE LOST RING

By MONSEIGNEUR DE COMMESURAM

Of two friends, one of whom left a diamond in the bed of his hostess, where the other found it, from which there arose a great discussion between them, which the husband of the said hostess settled in an effectual manner.

About the month of July¹ a great meeting and assembly was held between Calais and Gravelines, and near the castle of Oye, at which were assembled many princes and great lords, both of France and of England, to consider the question of the ransom of the Duke of Orléans,² then prisoner to the King of England. Amongst the English representatives was the Cardinal of Winchester, who had come to the said assembly in great and noble state, with many knights, and squires and ecclesiastics.

And amongst the other noblemen were two named John Stockton, squire and carver, and Thomas Brampton, cup-bearer to the said Cardinal—which said John

¹ 1440.

² Charles, Duke of Orléans, was taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt in 1415, and, as his ransom was not forthcoming, was detained a captive for 25 years, when the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy intervened to procure his freedom. Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, accepted a ransom of 200,000 gold crowns, payment of which was guaranteed by the Dauphin of France, Duke Philip of Burgundy, and other princes, with the consent of the King of France. The agreement was signed Nov. 22, 1440.

and Thomas loved each other like two brothers, for their clothes, harness and arms were always as nearly alike as possible, and they usually shared the same room and the same bed, and never was there heard any quarrel, dispute, or misunderstanding between them.

When the said Cardinal arrived at the said town of Calais there was hired for him to lodge the said noblemen, the house of Richard Fery, which is the largest house in the town of Calais, and it is the custom of all great lords passing through the town to lodge there.

The said Richard was married to a Dutchwoman, who was beautiful, courteous and well accustomed to receive guests.

While the treaty was being discussed, which was for more than two months, John Stockton and Thomas Brampton, who were both of the age of 26 or 28 years, wore bright crimson clothes,¹ and were ready for feats of arms by night or day—during this time, I say, notwithstanding the intimacy and friendship which existed between these two brothers-in-arms, the said John Stockton, unknown to the said Thomas, found means to visit their hostess, and often conversed with her, and paid her many of those attentions customary in love affairs, and finally was emboldened to ask the said hostess if he might be her friend, and she would be his lady-love.

To which, as though pretending to be astonished at such a request, she replied coldly that she did not hate him, or anyone, nor wish to, but that she loved all the world as far as in honour she could, but if she rightly

¹ Shakespeare several times in the course of the First Part of Henry VI mentions "the tawny robes of Winchester." Which is right?



understood his request, she could not comply with it without great danger of dishonour and scandal, and perhaps risk to her life, and for nothing in the world would she consent thereto.

John replied that she might very well grant his request, for that he would rather perish, and be tormented in the other world, than that she should be dishonoured by any fault of his, and that she was in no wise to suspect that her honour would not be safe in his keeping, and he again begged her to grant him this favour, and always deem him her servant and loving friend.

She pretended to tremble, and replied that truly he made all the blood freeze in her veins, such fear and dread had she of doing that which he asked. Then he approached her and requested a kiss, which the ladies and damsels of the said country of England are ready enough to grant,¹ and kissing her, begged her tenderly not to be afraid, for no person living should ever be made acquainted with what passed between them.

Then she said:

"I see that there is no escape, and that I must do as you wish, and as this must be so, in order to guard my honour, let me tell you that a regulation has been made by all the lords now living in Calais that every householder shall watch one night a week on the town walls. But as my husband has done so much, either himself or by his friends, for the lords and noblemen of the Cardinal, your master, who lodges here, he has only to watch half the night, and he will do so on Thursday

¹ Is this a libel on the English ladies of the 15th century, or is it true—as Bibliophile Jacob asserts in the footnote to this passage—that "English prudery is a daughter of the Reformation"?

next, from the time the bell rings in the evening until midnight; and whilst my husband is away on his watch, if you have anything to say to me, you will find me in my chamber, quite willing to listen to you, and along with my maid;”—who was quite ready to perform whatever her mistress wished.

John Stockton was much pleased with this answer, and thanked his hostess, and told her that it would not be his fault if he did not come at the appointed hour.

This conversation took place on the Monday, after dinner. But it should here be stated that Thomas Brampton had, unknown to his friend John Stockton, made similar requests to their hostess, but she would not grant his desire, but now raised his hopes and then dashed them to the ground, saying that he must have but a poor idea of her virtue, and that, if she did what he wished, she was sure that her husband and his relations and friends would take her life.

To this Thomas replied:

“My beloved mistress and hostess, I am a nobleman, and for no consideration would I bring upon you blame or dishonour, or I should be unworthy of the name of a gentleman. Believe me, that I would guard your honour as I do my own, and would rather die than reveal your secret; and that there is no friend or other person in the world, however dear to me, to whom I would relate our love-affair.”

She, therefore, noting the great affection and desire of the said Thomas, told him, on the Wednesday following the day on which she had given John the gracious reply recorded above—that, as he had a great desire to do her any service, she would not be so ungrateful as not to repay him. And then she told him how it was

arranged that her husband should watch the morrow night, like the other chief householders of the town, in compliance with the regulation made by the lords then staying in Calais. But as—thank God!—her husband had powerful friends to speak to the Cardinal for him, he had only to watch half the night, that is to say from midnight till the morning, and that if Thomas wished to speak to her during that time, she would gladly hear him, but, for God's sake let him come so secretly that no blame could attach to her.

Thomas replied that he desired nothing better, and with that he took leave of her.

On the morrow, which was Thursday, at vespers, after the bell had rung for the watch, John Stockton did not forget to appear at the hour his hostess had appointed. He went to her chamber, and found her there quite alone, and she received him and made him welcome, for the table was laid.

John requested that he might sup with her, that they might the better talk together,—which she would not at first grant, saying that it might cause scandal if he were found with her. But she finally gave way, and the supper—which seemed to John to take a long time—being finished, he embraced his hostess, and they enjoyed themselves together, both naked.

Before he entered the chamber, he had put on one of his fingers, a gold ring set with a large fine diamond, of the value of, perhaps, thirty nobles. And in playing together, the ring slipped from his finger in the bed without his knowing it.

When it was about 11 o'clock, the damsel begged him kindly to dress and leave, that he might not be found by her husband, whom she expected as soon as midnight

sounded, and that he would guard her honour as he had promised.

He, supposing that her husband would return soon, rose, dressed, and left the chamber as soon as the clock struck twelve, and without remembering the diamond he had left in the bed.

Not far from the door of the chamber John Stockton met Thomas Brampton, whom he mistook for his host, Richard. Thomas,—who had come at the hour the lady appointed,—made a similar mistake, and took John Stockton for Richard, and waited a few moments to see which way he would go.

Having watched the other disappear, Thomas went to the chamber, found the door ajar, and entered. The lady pretended to be much frightened and alarmed, and asked Thomas, with doubt and fear, whether he had met her husband who had just left to join the watch? He replied that he had met a man, but did not know whether it was her husband or another, and had waited a little in order to see which way he would go.

When she heard this, she kissed him boldly and told him he was welcome, and Thomas, without more ado, laid her on the bed and tumbled her. When she found what manner of man he was, she made haste to undress, and he also, and they both got into bed, and sacrificed to the god of love, and broke several lances.

But in performing these feats, Thomas met with an adventure, for he suddenly felt under his thigh, the diamond that John Stockton had left there, and without saying anything, or evincing any surprise, he picked it up, and put it on his finger.

They remained together until the morning, when the watch bell was about to ring, when, at the request of

the damsel he rose, but before he left they embraced with a long, loving kiss. He had scarcely gone when Richard came off the watch, on which he had been all night, very cold and sleepy, and found his wife just getting up. She made him a fire, and then he went to bed, for he had worked all night,—and so had his wife, though not in the same fashion.

It is the custom of the English, after they have heard Mass, to breakfast at a tavern, with the best wine; and about two days after these events, John and Thomas were in a company of other gentlemen and merchants, who were breakfasting together, and Stockton and Brampton were seated opposite each other.

Whilst they were eating, John looked at Thomas, and saw on one of his fingers the diamond. He gazed at it a long time, and came to the conclusion that it was the ring he had lost, he did not know where or when, and he begged Thomas to show him the diamond, who accordingly handed it to him, and when he had it in his hand he saw that it was his own, and told Thomas so, and asked him how he came by it. To this Thomas replied that it belonged to "him." Stockton maintained, on the contrary, that he had lost it but a short time before, and that if Thomas had found it in the chamber where they slept, it was not right of him to keep it, considering the affection and fraternity which had always existed between them. High words ensued, and both were angry and indignant with each other.

Thomas wished to get the diamond back, but could not obtain it. When the other gentlemen and merchants heard the dispute, all tried to bring about a reconciliation, but it was no good, for he who had lost the diamond would not let it out of his hands, and he who had

found it wanted it back, as a memento of his love-encounter with his mistress, so that it was difficult to settle the dispute.

Finally, one of the merchants, seeing that all attempts to make up the quarrel were useless, said that he had hit upon a plan with which both John and Thomas ought to be satisfied, but he would not say what it was unless both parties promised, under a penalty of ten nobles, to abide by what he said. All the company declared that the merchant had spoken well, and persuaded John and Thomas to abide by this decision, which they at last consented to do.

The merchant ordered the diamond to be placed in his hands, then that all those who had tried to settle the difference should be silent, and that they should leave the house where they were, and the first man they met, whatever his rank or condition should be told the whole matter of the dispute between the said John and Thomas, and, whatever he decided, his verdict should be accepted without demur by both parties.

Thereupon all the company left the house, and the first person they met was Richard, the host of both disputants, to whom the merchant narrated the whole of the dispute.

Richard—after he had heard all, and had asked those who were present if the account was correct, and the two were unwilling to let this dispute be settled by so many notable persons,—delivered his verdict—namely that the diamond should remain his, and that neither of the parties should have it.

When Thomas saw himself deprived of the diamond he had found, he was much vexed; and most probably so also was John Stockton, who had lost it.

Then Thomas requested all the company, except their host, to return to the house where they had breakfasted, and he would give them a dinner in order that they might hear how the diamond had come into his hands, to which they all agreed. And whilst the dinner was being prepared, he related the conversation he had with his hostess, how she had appointed him an hour for him to visit her, whilst her husband was out with the watch, and how the diamond was found.

When John Stockton heard this he was astonished, and declared that exactly the same had occurred to him, and on the same night, and that he was convinced that he must have dropped his diamond where Thomas had found it, and that it was far worse for him to lose it than it was for Thomas, for it had cost him dear, whereas Thomas had lost nothing.

To which Thomas replied that he ought not to complain that their host had adjudged it to be his, considering what their hostess had to suffer, and that he (John) had had first innings, whilst Thomas had had to act as his page or squire, and come after him.

So John Stockton was tolerably reconciled to the loss of his ring, since he could not otherwise help it. And all those who were present laughed loudly at the story of this adventure; and after they had all dined, each returned whithersoever he wished.

LXIII

MONTBLERU; OR THE THIEF

By G. DE MONTBLERU

*Of one named Montbleru, who at a fair at Antwerp stole from his companions their shirts and handkerchiefs, which they had given to the servant-maid of their hostess to be washed; and how afterwards they pardoned the thief, and then the said Montbleru told them the whole of the story.*¹

Montbleru found himself about two years ago at the fair of Antwerp, in the company of Monseigneur d'Estampes, who paid all his expenses—which was much to the liking of Montbleru.

One day amongst others, by chance he met Masters Ymbert de Playne, Roland Pipe, and Jehan Le Tourneur, who were having a merry time; and as he is pleasant and obliging, as everyone knows, they desired his company, and begged him to come and lodge with them, and then they would have a merrier time than ever.

Montbleru at first excused himself, on the ground that he ought not to quit Monseigneur d'Estampes who had brought him there.

“And there is a very good reason,” he said, “for he pays all my expenses.”

Nevertheless, he was willing to leave Monseigneur

¹ Is related by Montbleru himself, according to Mr. Wright's edition, but in Vérard there is no author's name.

d'Estampes if the others would pay his expenses, and they, who desired nothing better than his company, willingly and heartily agreed to this. And now hear how he paid them out.

These three worthy lords, Masters Ymbert, Roland, and Jehan Le Tourneur, stayed at Antwerp longer than they expected when they left Court, and each had brought but one shirt, and their handkerchiefs, etc., became dirty, which was a great inconvenience to them, for the weather was very hot, it being Pentecost. So they gave them to the servant-maid at their lodgings to wash, one Saturday night when they went to bed, and they were to have them clean the following morning when they rose.

But Montbleru was on the watch. When the morning came, the maid, who had washed the shirts and handkerchiefs, and dried them and folded them neatly and nicely, was called away by her mistress to go to the butcher to seek provisions for the dinner. She did as her mistress ordered, and left all these clothes in the kitchen, on a stool, expecting to find them on her return, but in this she was disappointed, for Montbleru, when he awoke and saw it was day, got out of bed, and putting on a dressing-gown over his shirt, went downstairs.

He went into the kitchen, where there was not a living soul, but only the shirts, handkerchiefs, and other articles, asking to be taken. Montbleru saw his opportunity, and took them, but was much puzzled to know where he could hide them. Once he thought of putting them amongst the big copper pots and pans which were in the kitchen; then of hiding them up his sleeve; but finally he concealed them in the hay in the stable, with a big heap of straw on the top, and that being done, he re-

turned to bed and lay down by the side of Jehan Le Tourneur.

When the servant-maid came back from the butcher's, she could not find the shirts, at which she was much vexed, and she asked everybody she met if they had seen them? They all told her they knew nothing about them, and God knows what a time she had. Then came the servants of these worthy lords, who expected the shirts and were afraid to go to their masters without them, and grew angry because the shirts could not be found, and so did the host, and the hostess, and the maid.

When it was about nine o'clock, these good lords called their servants, but none of them answered, for they were afraid to tell their masters about the loss of their shirts; but at last, however, when it was between 11 and 12 o'clock, the host came, and the servants, and told the gentlemen how their shirts had been stolen, at which news two of them—Masters Ymbert and Roland—lost patience, but Jehan Le Tourneur took it easily, and did nothing but laugh, and called Montbleru, who pretended to be asleep, but who heard and knew all, and said to him:

"Montbleru, we are all in a nice mess. They have stolen our shirts."

"Holy Mary! what do you say?" replied Montbleru, pretending to be only just awake. "That is bad news."

When they had discussed the robbery of their shirts for a long time—Montbleru well knew who was the thief—these worthy lords said:

"It is late, and we have not yet heard Mass, and it is Sunday, and we cannot very well go without a shirt. What is to be done?"

"By my oath!" said the host, "I know of nothing bet-

ter than to lend you each one of my shirts, such as they are. They are not as good as yours, but they are clean, and there is nothing better to be done."

They were obliged to take their host's shirts which were too short and too small, and made of hard, rough linen, and God knows they were a pretty sight in them.

They were soon ready, thank God, but it was so late that they did not know where they could hear Mass. Then said Montbleru, in his familiar way:

"As for hearing Mass, it is too late to-day; but I know a church in this town where at least we shall not fail to see God."

"That is better than nothing," said the worthy lords. "Come, come! let us get away, for it is very late, and to lose our shirts, and not to hear Mass to-day would be a double misfortune; and it is time we went to church if we want to hear Mass."

Montbleru took them to the principal church in Antwerp, where there is a God on an ass.¹ When they had each said a paternoster, they said to Montbleru:

"Where shall we see God?"

"I will show you," he replied. Then he showed them God mounted on an ass, and added: "You will never fail to find Him here at whatever hour you come."

They began to laugh in spite of the discomfort their shirts caused them. Then they went back to dinner, and were after that I know not how many days at Antwerp, and left without their shirts, for Montbleru had hidden them in a safe place, and afterwards sold them for five gold crowns.

Now God so willed that in the first week of Lent,

¹ A picture or bas-relief, representing Christ's entry into Jerusalem, is probably meant.

Montbleru was at dinner with the three worthy gentlemen before named, and in the course of his talk he reminded them of the shirts they had lost at Antwerp, and said:

"Alas, the poor thief who robbed you will be damned for that, unless God and you pardon him. Do you bear him any ill-will?"

"By God!" said Master Ymbert, "my dear sir, I have thought no more about it,—I had forgotten it long since."

"At least," said Montbleru, "you pardon him, do you not?"

"By St. John!" he replied, "I would not have him damned for my sake."

"By my oath, that is well said," answered Montbleru. "And you Master Roland,—do you also pardon him?"

After a good deal of trouble, he agreed to pardon the thief, but as the theft rankled in his mind, he found the word hard to pronounce.

"And will you also pardon him, Master Roland?" said Montbleru. "What will you gain by having a poor thief damned for a wretched shirt and handkerchief?"

"Truly I pardon him," said he. "He is quit as far as I am concerned, since there is nothing else to be done."

"By my oath, you are a good man," said Montbleru.

Then came the turn of Jehan Le Tourneur. Montbleru said to him:

"Now, Jehan, you will not be worse than the others. Everything will be pardoned to this poor stealer of shirts unless you object."

"I don't object," he replied. "I have long since pardoned him, and I will give him absolution into the bargain."

"You could not say more," rejoined Montbleru, "and by my oath I am greatly obliged to you for having pardoned the thief who stole your shirts, as far as I personally am concerned, for I am the thief who stole your shirts at Antwerp. So I profit by your free pardon, and thank you for it, as I ought to do."

When Montbleru confessed this theft, and had been forgiven by all the party as you have heard, it need not be asked if Masters Ymbert, Roland, and Jehan Le Tourneur were astonished, for they had never suspected that it was Montbleru who had played that trick upon them, and they reproached him playfully with the theft. But he, knowing his company, excused himself cleverly for having played such a joke upon them, and told them that it was his custom to take whatever he found unprotected, —especially with people like them.

They only laughed, but asked him how he had managed to effect the theft, and he told them the whole story, and said also that he had made five crowns out of his booty, after which they asked him no more.

LXIV

THE OVER-CUNNING CURE

By MICHAULT DE CHANGY

*Of a priest who would have played a joke upon a gelder named Trenchecouille, but, by the connivance of his host, was himself castrated.*¹

There formerly lived in this country, in a place that I have a good reason for not mentioning (if any should recognise it, let him be silent as I am) a curé who was overfond of confessing his female parishioners. In fact, there was not one who had not had to do with him, especially the young ones—for the old he did not care.

When he had long carried on this holy life and virtuous exercise, and his fame had spread through all the country round, he was punished in the way that you will hear, by one of his parishioners, to whom, however, he had done nothing concerning his wife.

He was one day at dinner, and enjoying himself, at the inn kept by his parishioner, and as they were in the midst of their dinner, there came a man named Trenchecouille, whose business it was to cut cattle, pull teeth, and other matters, and who had come to the inn for one of these purposes.

The host received him well, and asked him to sit down, and, without being much pressed, he sat down with the curé and the others, to eat.

¹ From an old fabliau, and often imitated.

The curé, who was a great joker, began to talk to this gelder and asked him a hundred thousand questions about his business, and the gelder replied as he best could.

At the end, the curé turned to the host, and whispered in his ear:

"Shall we play a trick upon this gelder?"

"Oh, yes, let us," replied the host. "But how shall we do it?"

"By my oath," said the curé, "we will play him a pretty trick, if you will help me."

"I am quite willing," replied the host.

"I will tell you what we will do," said the curé. "I will pretend to have a pain in the testicle, and bargain with him to cut it out; then I will be bound and laid on the table all ready, and when he comes near to cut me, I will jump up and show him my backside."

"That is well said," replied my host, who at once saw what he had to do. "We shall never hit on anything better. We will all help you with the joke."

"Very well," said the curé.

After this the curé began again to rally the gelder, and at last told him that he had want of a man like him, for that he had a testicle all diseased and rotten, and would like to find a man who would extract it, and he said it so quietly and calmly that the gelder believed him, and replied:

"Monsieur le curé, I would have you know that without either disparaging myself or boasting, there is not a man in this country who can do the job better than I can, and for the sake of the host here, I will do my best to satisfy you."

"Truly, that is well said," replied the curé.

In short, all was agreed, and when the dinner had been removed, the gelder began to make his preparations, and on the other hand the curé prepared to play the practical joke (which was to turn out no joke for him), and told the host and the others what they were to do.

Whilst these preparations were being made on both sides, the host went to the gelder, and said:

"Take care, and, whatever the priest may say, cut out both his testicles, clean,—and fail not, if you value your carcass."

"By St. Martin, I will," replied the gelder, "since you wish it. I have ready a knife so sharp that I will present you with his testicles before he has time to say a word."

"We shall see what you can do," said the host, "but if you fail, I will never again have anything to do with you."

All being ready, the table was brought, and the curé, in his doublet, pretended to be in great pain, and promised a bottle of good wine to the gelder.

The host and his servants laid hold of the curé so that he could not get away, and for better security they tied him tightly, and told him that was to make the joke better, and that they would let him go when he wished, and, he like a fool, believed them. Then came the brave gelder, having a little razor concealed in his hand, and began to feel the curé's testicles.

"In the devil's name," said the curé, "do it well and with one cut. Touch them fast as you can, and afterwards I will tell you which one I want taken out."

"Very well," he replied, and lifting up the shirt, took hold of the testicles, which were big and heavy; and

without enquiring which was the bad one, cut them both out at a single stroke.

The good curé began to yell, and make more ado than ever man made.

"Hallo, hallo!" said the host; "have patience. What is done, is done. Let us bandage you up."

The gelder did all that was necessary, and then went away, expecting a handsome present from the host.

It need not be said that the curé was much grieved at this deprivation, and he reviled the host, who was the cause of the mischief, but God knows he excused himself well, and said that if the gelder had not disappeared so quickly, he would have served him so that he would never have cut any one again.

"As you imagine," he said, "I am greatly grieved at your misfortune, and still more that it should have happened in my inn."

The news soon spread through the town, and it need not be said that many damsels were vexed to find themselves deprived of the curé's instrument, but on the other hand the long-suffering husbands were so happy that I could neither speak nor write the tenth part of their joy.

Thus, as you have heard, was the curé, who had deceived and duped so many others, punished. Never after that did he dare to show himself amongst men, but soon afterwards ended in grief and seclusion his miserable life.

LXV

INDISCRETION REPROVED, BUT NOT PUNISHED

By the PROVOST OF WASTENNES

Of a woman who heard her husband say that an inn-keeper at Mont St. Michel was excellent at copulating, so went there, hoping to try for herself, but her husband took means to prevent it, at which she was much displeased, as you will hear shortly.

Often a man says things for which he is sorry afterwards, and so it happened formerly that a good fellow who lived in a village near Mont St. Michel, talked one night at a supper, at which were present his wife, and several strangers and neighbours, of an inn-keeper of Mont St. Michel, and declared, affirmed, and swore on his honour, that this inn-keeper had the finest, biggest, and thickest member in all the country round, and could use it so well that four, five, or six times cost him no more trouble than taking off his hat.

All those who were at table listened to this favourable account of the prowess of mine host of Mont St. Michel, and made what remarks they pleased about it, but the person who took the most notice was the lady of the house, the wife of the man who related the story, who had listened attentively, and to whom it seemed that a woman would be most happy and fortunate who had a husband so endowed.

And she also thought in her heart that if she could devise some cunning excuse she would some day go to Mont St. Michel and put up at the inn kept by the man with the big member, and it would not be her fault if she did not try whether the report were true.

To execute what she had so boldly devised, at the end of six or eight days she took leave of her husband to go on a pilgrimage to Mont St. Michel; and she invented some clever excuse for her journey, as women well know how to do. Her husband did not refuse her permission to go, though he had his suspicions.

At parting, her husband told her to make an offering to Saint Michael, and that she was to lodge at the house of the said landlord, and he recommended her to him a hundred thousand times.

She promised to accomplish all he ordered, and upon that took leave and went away, much desiring, God knows, to find herself at Mont St. Michel. As soon as she had left, the husband mounted his horse, and went as fast as he could, by another road to that which his wife had taken, to Mont St. Michel, and arrived secretly, before his wife, at the inn kept by the man already mentioned, who most gladly welcomed him. When he was in his chamber, he said to his host:

“My host, you and I have been friends for a long time. I will tell you what has brought me to your town now. About five or six days ago, a lot of good fellows were having supper at my house, and amongst other talk, I related how it was said throughout the country that there was no man better furnished than you”—and then he told him as nearly as possible all that had been said. “And it happened,” he continued, “that my wife listened attentively to what I said, and never rested till she ob-

tained permission to come to this town. And by my oath, I verily suspect that her chief intention is to try if she can, if my words were true that I said about your big member. She will soon be here I expect, for she longed to come: so I pray you when she does come you will receive her gladly, and welcome her, and do all that she asks. But at all events do not deceive me; take care that you do not touch her. Appoint a time to come to her when she is in bed, and I will go in your place, and afterwards I will tell you some good news."

"Let me alone," said the host. "I will take care and act my part well."

"At all events," said the other, "be sure and serve me no trick, for I know well enough that she will be ready to."

"By my oath," said the host, "I assure you I will not come near her," and he did not.

Soon after came our wench and her maid, both very tired, God knows; and the good host came forth, and received his guests as he had been enjoined, and as he had promised. He caused mademoiselle to be taken to a fair chamber, and a good fire to be made, and brought the best wine in the house, and sent for some fine fresh cherries, and came to banquet with her whilst supper was getting ready. When he saw his opportunity, he began to make his approaches to her, but in a roundabout way. To cut matters short, an agreement was made between them that he should come secretly at midnight to sleep with her.

This being arranged, he went and told the husband of the dame, who, at the hour named, went in mine host's stead, and did the best he could, and rose before day-break and returned to his own bed.

When it was day, the wench, quite vexed and melancholy, called her maid, and they rose, and dressed as hastily as they could, and would have paid the host, but he said he would take nothing from her. And with that she left without hearing Mass, or seeing St. Michael, or breakfasting either; and without saying a single word, returned home. But you must know that her husband was there already, and asked her what good news there was at Mont St. Michel. She, feeling as annoyed as she could be, hardly deigned to reply.

"And what sort of welcome," asked her husband, "did mine host give you? By God, he is a good fellow!"

"A good fellow!" she said. "Nothing very wonderful! I will not give him more praise than is his due."

"No, dame?" he replied. "By St. John, I should have thought that for love of me he would have given you a hearty welcome."

"I care not about his welcome," she said. "I do not go on a pilgrimage for the sake of his, or any one else's welcome. I only think of my devotion."

"Devotion, wife!" he answered. "By Our Lady, you had none! I know very well why you are so vexed and sorrowful. You did not find what you expected—that is the exact truth. Ha, ha, madam! I know the cause of your pilgrimage. You wanted to make trial of the physical gifts of our host of St. Michel, but, by St. John, I was on my guard, and always will be if I can help it. And that you may not think that I lied when I told you that he had such a big affair, by God, I said nothing but what is true. But you wanted something more than hearsay evidence, and, if I had not stopped you, you would in your 'devotion' have tried its power for yourself. You I see know all, and to remove any doubts you may have

on the subject, I may tell you that I came last night at the appointed hour, and took his place—so be content with what I was able to do, and remain satisfied with what you have. This time I pardon you, but take care that it never occurs again.”

The damsel, confused and astonished at being thus caught, as soon as she could speak, begged his pardon, and promised never to do anything of the sort again. And I believe that she never did.

LXVI

THE WOMAN AT THE BATH

By PHILIPPE DE LAON

Of an inn-keeper at Saint Omer who put to his son a question, for which he was afterwards sorry when he heard the reply, at which his wife was much ashamed, as you will hear later.

Some time ago I was at Saint Omer with a number of noble companions, some from the neighbourhood and Boulogne, and some from elsewhere, and after a game of tennis, we went to sup at the inn of a tavern-keeper, who is a well-to-do man and a good fellow, and who has a very pretty and buxom wife, by whom he has a fine boy, of the age of six or seven years.

We were all seated at supper, the inn-keeper, his wife, and her son, who stood near her, being with us, and some began to talk, others to sing and make good cheer, and our host did his best to make himself agreeable.

His wife had been that day to the warm baths, and her little son with her. So our host thought, to make the company laugh, to ask his son about the people who were at the baths with his mother,¹ and said:

“Come here, my son, and tell me truly which of all the women at the baths had the finest and the biggest —?”

¹ The public baths were then much frequented, especially by the lower classes. Men, women, and children all bathed together.

The child being questioned before his mother, whom he feared as children usually do, looked at her and did not speak.

The father, not expecting to find him so quiet, said again:

"Tell me, my son; who had the biggest —. Speak boldly."

"I don't know, father," replied the child, still glancing at his mother.

"By God, you lie," said his father. "Tell me! I want to know."

"I dare not," said the boy, "my mother would beat me."

"No, she will not," said the father. "You need not mind. I will see she does not hurt you."

Our hostess, the boy's mother, not thinking that her son would tell (as he did) said to him:

"Answer boldly what your father asks you."

"You will beat me," he said.

"No, I will not," she replied.

The father, now that the boy had permission to speak, again asked:

"Well, my son, on your word, did you look at all the women who were at the baths?"

"By St. John, yes, father."

"Were there plenty of them? Speak, and don't lie."

"I never saw so many. It seemed a real warren of —."

"Well then; tell us now who had the finest and the biggest?"

"Truly," replied the boy, "mother had the finest and biggest—but 'he' had such a large nose."

"Such a large nose?" said the father. "Go along, go along! you are a good boy."

We all began to laugh and to drink, and to talk about the boy who chattered so well. But his mother did not know which way to look, she was so ashamed, because her son had spoken about a nose, and I expect that he was afterwards well beaten for having told tales out of school. Our host was a good fellow, but he afterwards repented having put a question the answer to which made him blush. That is all for the present.

LXVII

THE WOMAN WITH THREE HUSBANDS

By PHILIPPE DE LAON

Of a "fur hat" of Paris, who wished to deceive a cobbler's wife, but overreached himself, for he married her to a barber, and thinking that he was rid of her, would have wedded another, but she prevented him, as you will hear more plainly hereafter.

About three years ago a noteworthy adventure happened to one of the fur hats of the Parliament of Paris.¹ And that it should not be forgotten, I relate this story, not that I hold all the "fur caps" to be good and upright men; but because there was not a little, but a large measure of duplicity about this particular one, which is a strange and peculiar thing as every one knows.

To come to my story, this fur hat,—that is to say this councillor of Parliament,—fell in love with the wife of a cobbler of Paris,—a good and pretty woman, and ready-witted. The fur hat managed, by means of money and other ways, to get an interview with the cobbler's fair wife on the quiet and alone, and if he had been enamoured of her before he enjoyed her, he was still more so afterwards, which she perceived and was on her guard, and resolved to stand off till she obtained her price.

His love for her was at such fever heat, that by com-

¹ The councillors of Parliament wore a cap of fur, bordered with ermine.

mands, prayers, promises, and gifts, he tried to make her come to him, but she would not, in order to aggravate and increase his malady. He sent ambassadors of all sorts to his mistress, but it was no good—she would rather die than come.

Finally—to shorten the story—in order to make her come to him as she used formerly to do, he promised her in the presence of three or four witnesses, that he would take her to wife if her husband died.

As soon as she obtained this promise, she consented to visit him at various times when she could get away, and he continued to be as love-sick as ever. She, knowing her husband to be old, and having the aforesaid promise, already looked upon herself as the Councillor's wife.

But a short time afterwards, the much-desired death of the cobbler was known and published, and his fair widow at once went with a bound to the abode of the fur cap, who received her gladly, and again promised to make her his wife.

These two good people—the fur cap, and his mistress, the cobbler's widow—were now together. But it often happens that what can be got without trouble is not worth the trouble of getting, and so it was in this case, for our fur cap soon began to weary of the cobbler's widow, and his love for her grew cold. She often pressed him to perform the marriage he had promised, but he said:

“By my word, my dear, I can never marry, for I am a churchman, and hold such and such benefices, as you know. The promise I formerly made you is null and void, and was caused by the great love I bear you, to win you to me the more easily.”

She, believing that he did belong to the Church, and

seeing that she was as much mistress of his house as though she had been his wedded wife, went her accustomed way, and never troubled more about the marriage; but at last was persuaded by the fine words of our fur cap to leave him, and marry a barber, their neighbour, to whom the Councillor gave 300 gold crowns, and God knows that the woman also was well provided with clothes.

Now you must know that our fur cap had a definite object in arranging this marriage, which would never have come off if he had not told his mistress that in future he intended to serve God, and live on his benefices, and give up everything to the Church. But he did just the contrary, as soon as he had got rid of her by marrying her to the barber; for about a year later, he secretly treated for the hand of the daughter of a rich and notable citizen of Paris.

The marriage was agreed to and arranged, and a day fixed for the wedding. He also disposed of his benefices, which were only held by simple tonsure.

These things were known throughout Paris, and came to the knowledge of the cobbler's widow, now the barber's wife, and, as you may guess, she was much surprised.

"Oh, the traitor," she said; "has he deceived me like this? He deserted me under pretence of serving God, and made me over to another man. But, by Our Lady of Clery, the matter shall not rest here."

Nor did it, for she cited our fur cap before the Bishop, and there her advocate stated his case clearly and courteously, saying that the fur cap had promised the cobbler's wife, in the presence of several witnesses, that if her husband died he would make her his wife. When



her husband died, the Councillor had kept her for about a year, and then handed her over to a barber.

To shorten the story, the witnesses having been heard, and the case debated, the Bishop annulled the marriage of the cobbler's widow to the barber, and enjoined and commanded the fur cap to take her as his wife, for so she was by right, since he had carnal connection with her after the aforesaid promise.

Thus was our fur cap brought to his senses. He missed marrying the citizen's fair daughter, and lost the 300 crowns, which the barber had for keeping his wife for a year. And if the Councillor was ill-pleased to have his old mistress again, the barber was glad enough to get rid of her.

In the manner that you have heard, was one of the fur caps of the Parliament of Paris once served.

LXVIII

THE JADE DESPOILED

By MESSIRE CHRESTIEN DE DYGOIGNE

Of a married man who found his wife with another man, and devised means to get from her her money, clothes, jewels, and all, down to her chemise, and then sent her away in that condition, as shall be afterwards recorded.

It is no new and strange thing for wives to make their husbands jealous,—or indeed, by God, cuckolds. And so it happened formerly, in the city of Antwerp, that a married woman, who was not the chastest person in the world, was desired by a good fellow to do—you know what. And she, being kind and courteous, did not like to refuse the request, but gladly consented, and they two continued this life for a long time.

In the end, Fortune, tired of always giving them good luck, willed that the husband should catch them in the act, much to his own surprise. Perhaps though it would be hard to say which was the most surprised—the lover, or his mistress, or the husband. Nevertheless, the lover, with the aid of a good sword he had, made his escape without getting any harm. There remained the husband and wife, and what they said to each other may be guessed.

After a few words on both sides, the husband, thinking to himself that as she had commenced to sin it would

be difficult to break her of her bad habits, and that if she did sin again it might come to the knowledge of other people, and he might be dishonoured; and considering also that to beat or scold her would be only lost labour, determined to see if he could not drive her out, and never let her disgrace his house again. So he said to his wife:

"Well, I see that you are not such as you ought to be; nevertheless, hoping that you will never again behave as you have behaved, let no more be said. But let us talk of another matter. I have some business on hand which concerns me greatly, and you also. We must put in it all our jewels; and if you have any little hoard of money stored away, bring it forth, for it is required."

"By my oath," said the wench, "I will do so willingly, if you will pardon me the wrong I have done you."

"Don't speak about it," he replied, "and no more will I."

She, believing that she had absolution and remission of her sins, to please her husband, and atone for the scandal she had caused, gave him all the money she had, her gold rings, rich stuffs, certain well-stuffed purses, a number of very fine kerchiefs, many whole furs of great value—in short, all that she had, and that her husband could ask, she gave to do him pleasure.

"The devil!" quoth he; "still I have not enough."

When he had everything, down to the gown and petticoat she wore, he said: "I must have that gown."

"Indeed!" said she, "I have nothing else to wear. Do you want me to go naked?"

"You must," he said, "give it me, and the petticoat also, and be quick about it, for either by good-will or force, I must have them."

She, knowing that force was not on her side, stripped off her gown and petticoat and stood in her chemise.

"There!" she said; "have I done what pleases you?"

"Not always," he replied. "If you obey me now, God knows you do so willingly—but let us leave that and talk of another matter. When I married you, you brought scarcely anything with you, and the little that you had you have dissipated or forfeited. There is no need for me to speak of your conduct—you know better than anyone what you are, and being what you are, I hereby renounce you, and say farewell to you for ever! There is the door! go your way; and if you are wise, you will never come into my presence again."

The poor wench, more astounded than ever, did not dare to stay after this terrible reproof, so she left, and went, I believe, to the house of her lover, for the first night, and sent many ambassadors to try and get back her apparel and belongings, but it was no avail. Her husband was headstrong and obstinate, and would never hear her spoken about, and still less take her back, although he was much pressed both by his own friends and those of his wife.

She was obliged to earn other clothes, and instead of her husband, lived with a friend until her husband's wrath is appeased, but, up to the present, he is still displeased with her, and will on no account see her.

LXIX

THE VIRTUOUS LADY WITH TWO HUSBANDS

By MONSEIGNEUR

Of a noble knight of Flanders, who was married to a beautiful and noble lady. He was for many years a prisoner in Turkey during which time his good and loving wife was, by the importunities of her friends, induced to marry another knight. Soon after she had remarried, she heard that her husband had returned from Turkey, whereupon she allowed herself to die of grief, because she had contracted a fresh marriage.¹

It is not only known to all those of the city of Ghent—where the incident that I am about to relate happened not long ago—but to all those of Flanders, and many others, that at the battle fought between the King of Hungary and Duke Jehan (whom may God absolve) on one side, and the Grand Turk and all his Turks on the other,² that many noble knights and esquires—French, Flemish, German, and Picardians—were taken prisoners, of whom some were put to death in the presence of the said Great Turk, others were imprisoned for life, and others condemned to slavery, amongst which last was a

¹ M. Leroux de Lincy believes that Le Sage took the story of Dona Mercia—interpolated in “Gil Blas”—from this tale.

² The battle of Nicopolis (28th September, 1396), when Sigismond, King of Hungary, and Jean-sans-Peur, son of the Duke of Burgundy, who had recruited a large army for the purpose of raising the siege of Constantinople, were met and overthrown by the Sultan, Bajazet I.

noble knight of the said country of Flanders, named Clayz Utenhoven.

For many years he endured this slavery, which was no light task, but an intolerable martyrdom to him, considering the luxuries upon which he had been nourished, and the condition in which he had lived.

Now you must know that he had formerly married at Ghent a beautiful and virtuous lady, who loved him and held him dear with all her heart, and who daily prayed that shortly she might see him again if he were still alive; and that if he were dead, God would of His grace pardon his sins, and include him in the number of those glorious martyrs, who to repel the infidel, and that the holy Catholic faith might be exalted, had given up their mortal lives.

This good lady, who was rich, beautiful, virtuous, and possessed of many noble friends, was continually pressed and assailed by her friends to remarry; they declaring and affirming that her husband was dead, and that if he were alive he would have returned like the others; or if he were a prisoner, she would have received notice to prepare his ransom. But whatever reasons were adduced, this virtuous lady could not be persuaded to marry again, but excused herself as well as she was able.

These excuses served her little or nothing, for her relatives and friends so pressed her that she was obliged to obey. But God knows that it was with no small regret, and after she had been for nine years deprived of the presence of her good and loyal husband, whom she believed to be long since dead, as did most or all who knew him; but God, who guards and preserves his servants and champions, had otherwise ordered it, for he still lived and performed his arduous labours as a slave.

To return to our story. This virtuous lady was married to another knight, and lived with him for half a year, without hearing anything further about her first husband.

By the will of God, however, this good and true knight, Messire Clayz, who was still in Turkey, when his wife married again, and there working as a slave, was, by means of some Christian gentlemen and merchants, delivered, and returned in their galley.

As he was on his return, he met and found in passing through various places, many of his acquaintances, who were overjoyed at his delivery, for in truth he was a most valiant man, of great renown and many virtues; and so the most joyful rumour of his much wished-for deliverance spread into France, Artois, and Picardy, where his virtues were not less known than they were in Flanders, of which country he was a native. And from these countries it soon reached Flanders, and came to the ears of his beauteous and virtuous lady and spouse, who was astounded thereat, and her feelings so overcame her as to deprive her of her senses.

“Ah,” she said, as soon as she could speak, “my heart was never willing to do that which my relations and friends forced me to do. Alas! what will my most loving lord and husband say? I have not kept faith with him as I should, but—like a frail, frivolous, and weak-minded woman,—have given to another part and portion of that of which he alone should be lord and master! I cannot, and dare not await his coming. I am not worthy that he should look at me, or that I should be seen in his company,” and with these words her most chaste, virtuous, and loving heart failed her, and she fell fainting.

She was carried and laid upon a bed, and her senses

returned to her, but from that time it was not in the power of man or woman to make her eat or sleep, and thus she continued three days, weeping continually and in the greatest grief of mind that ever woman was. During which time she confessed and did all that a good Christian should, and implored pardon of all, and most especially of her husband.

Soon afterwards she died, which was a great misfortune; and it need not be told what grief fell upon the said lord, her husband, when he heard the news. His sorrow was such that he was in great danger of dying as his most loving wife had done; but God, who had saved him from many other great perils, preserved him also from this.

LXX

THE DEVIL'S HORN

By MONSEIGNEUR

Of a noble knight of Germany, a great traveller in his time; who after he had made a certain voyage, took a vow to never make the sign of the Cross, owing to the firm faith and belief that he had in the holy sacrament of baptism—in which faith he fought the devil, as you will hear.

A noble knight of Germany, a great traveller, distinguished in arms, courteous, and largely endowed with all good virtues, had just returned from a long journey, and was in his castle, when he was asked by one of his vassals living in the same town, to be godfather to his child, which had been born on the same day that the knight returned.

To which request the knight willingly acceded, and although he had during his life held many children at the font, he had never before listened to the holy words pronounced by the priest at this holy and excellent sacrament as he did this time, and they seemed to him—as indeed they are—full of high and divine mystery.

The baptism being finished, he being liberal and courteous and willing to oblige his vassals, remained to dine in the town, instead of returning to his castle, and with him dined the curé, his fellow sponsor, and other persons of renown.

The discourse turned on various matters, when the knight began to greatly praise the excellent sacrament of baptism, and said in a loud and clear voice that all might hear:

"If I knew for a truth that at my baptism had been pronounced the great and holy words which I heard to-day at the baptism of my latest god-son, I would not believe that the devil could have any power or authority over me, except to tempt me, and I would refrain from ever making the sign of the Cross, not that—let it be well understood—I do not well know that sign is sufficient to repel the devil, but because I believe that the words pronounced at the baptism of every Christian (if they are such as I have to-day heard) are capable of driving away all the devils of hell, however many they might be."

"Truly then, monseigneur," replied the curé, "I assure you 'in verbo sacerdotis' that the same words which were said to-day at the baptism of your godson were pronounced at your baptism. I know it well, for I myself baptised you, and I remember it as well as though it were yesterday. God be merciful to monseigneur your father—he asked me the day after your baptism, what I thought of his son; such and such were your sponsors, and such and such were present," and he related all particulars about the baptism, and showed that it was certain that in not a word did it differ from that of his godson.

"Since it is thus," then said the noble knight, "I vow to God, my creator, that I have such firm faith in the holy sacrament of baptism that never again, for any danger, encounter, or assault that the devil may make against me, will I make the sign of the Cross, but solely

by the memory of the sacrament of baptism I will drive him behind me; such a firm belief have I in this divine mystery, that it does not seem possible to me that the devil can hurt a man so shielded, for that rite needs no other aid if accompanied by true faith."

The dinner passed, and I know not how many years after, the good knight was in a large town in Germany, about some business which drew him thither, and was lodged in an inn. As he was one night along with his servants, after supper, talking and jesting with them, he wished to retire, but as his servants were enjoying themselves he would not disturb them, so he took a candle and went alone. As he entered the closet he saw before him a most horrible and terrible monster, having large and long horns, eyes brighter than the flames of a furnace, arms thick and long, sharp and cutting claws,—in fact a most extraordinary monster, and a devil, I should imagine.

And for such the good knight took it, and was at first greatly startled at such a meeting. Nevertheless, he boldly determined to defend himself if he were attacked, and he remembered the vow he had made concerning the holy and divine mystery of baptism. And in this faith he walked up to the monster, whom I have called a devil, and asked him who he was and what he wanted?

The devil, without a word, attacked him, and the good knight defended himself, though he had no other weapons than his hands (for he was in his doublet, being about to go to bed) and the protection of his firm faith in the holy mystery of baptism.

The struggle lasted long, and the good knight was so weary that it was strange he could longer endure such an assault. But he was so well-armed by his faith that

the blows of his enemy had but little effect. At last, when the combat had lasted a full hour, the good knight took the devil by the horns, and tore one of them out, and beat him therewith soundly.

Then he went away victorious, leaving the devil writhing on the ground, and went back to his servants, who were still enjoying themselves, as they had been doing when he left. They were much frightened to see their master sweating and out of breath, and with his face all scratched, and his doublet, shirt, and hose disarranged and torn.

"Ah, sir," they cried; "whence come you, and who has thus mauled you?"

"Who?" he replied. "Why it was the devil, with whom I have fought so long that I am out of breath, and in the condition in which you see me; and I swear to you that I truly believe he would have strangled and devoured me, if I had not at that moment remembered my baptism, and the great mystery of that holy sacrament, and the vow that I made I know not how many years ago. And, believe me, I have kept that vow, and though I was in danger, I never made the sign of the Cross, but, remembering the aforesaid holy sacrament, boldly defended myself, and have escaped scot free; for which I praise and thank our Lord who with the shield of faith hath preserved me safely. Let all the other devils in hell come; as long as this protection endures, I fear them not. Praise be to our blessed God who is able to endue his knights with such weapons."

The servants of the good knight, when they heard their master relate this story, were very glad to find he had escaped so well, and much astonished at the horn he showed them, and which he had torn out of the devil's

head. And they could not discover, neither could any person who afterwards saw it, of what it was formed; if it were bone or horn, as other horns are, or what it was.

Then one of the knight's servants said that he would go and see if this devil were still where his master had left it, and if he found it he would fight it, and tear out its other horn. His master told him not to go, but he said he would.

"Do not do it," said his master; "the danger is too great."

"I care not," replied the other; "I will go."

"If you take my advice," said his master, "you will not go."

But he would disobey his master and go. He took in one hand a torch, and in the other a great axe, and went to the place where his master had met and fought the devil. What happened no one knows, but his master, who, fearing for his servant, followed him as quickly as he could, found neither man nor devil, nor ever heard what became of the man.

Thus, in the manner that you have heard, did this good knight fight against the devil, and overcome him by the virtue of the holy sacrament of baptism.

LXXI

THE CONSIDERATE CUCKOLD

By MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC

Of a knight of Picardy, who lodged at an inn in the town of St. Omer, and fell in love with the hostess, with whom he was amusing himself—you know how—when her husband discovered them; and how he behaved—as you will shortly hear.

At Saint Omer, not long ago, there happened an amusing incident, which is as true as the Gospel, and is known to many notable people worthy of faith and belief. In short, the story is as follows:

A noble knight of Picardy, who was lively and lusty, and a man of great authority and high position, came to an inn where the quartermaster of Duke Philip of Burgundy had appointed him to lodge.¹

As soon as he had jumped off his horse and put foot to the ground, his hostess—as is the custom in that part of the country—came forward smiling most affably, and received him most honourably, and, as he was the most kind and courteous of men, he embraced her and kissed her gently, for she was pretty and nice, healthy-looking and nattily dressed—in fact, very tempting to kiss and

¹ The “fourrier”—which, for want of a better word, I have translated as “quartermaster”—was an officer of the household of a prince or great lord. One of his duties was to provide lodgings for all the retinue whenever his master was travelling.

cuddle—and at first sight each took a strong liking to the other.

The knight wondered by what means he could manage to enjoy the person of his hostess, and confided in one of his servants, who in a very short time so managed the affair that the two were brought together.

When the noble knight saw his hostess ready to listen to whatever he had to say, you may fancy that he was joyful beyond measure; and in his great haste and ardent desire to discuss the question he wanted to argue with her, forgot to shut the door of the room, which his servant, when he departed after bringing the woman in, had left half open.

The knight without troubling about preludes, began an oration in dumb-show; and the hostess, who was not sorry to hear him, replied to his arguments in such a manner that they soon agreed well together, and never was music sweeter, or instruments in better tune, than it was for those two, by God's mercy.

But it happened, by I know not what chance, that the host of the inn, the husband of the woman, was seeking his wife to tell her something, and passing by chance by the chamber where his wife and the knight were playing the cymbals, heard the sound. He turned towards the spot where this pleasant pastime was going on, and pushing open the door, saw the knight and his wife harnessed together, at which he was by far the most astonished of the three, and drew back quickly, fearing to prevent and disturb the said work which they were performing. But all that he did by way of menace or remonstrance was to call out from behind the door:

"Morableu! you are not only wicked but thoughtless. Have you not the sense, when you want to do anything

of that sort, to shut the door behind you? Just fancy what it would have been if anyone else had found you! By God, you would have been ruined and dishonoured, and your misdeeds discovered and known to all the town! In the devil's name, be more careful another time!" and without another word, he closed the door and went away; and the honest couple retuned their bagpipes, and finished the tune they had begun.

And when this was finished, each went his or her own way as unconcernedly as though nothing had happened; and the circumstance would, I believe, have never been known—or at least not so publicly as to come to your ears, and the ears of so many other people,—had it not been that the husband vexed himself so little about the matter that he thought less of being cuckolded than he did of finding the door unbolted.

LXXII

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

By MONSEIGNEUR DE COMMENSURAM

Of a gentleman of Picardy who was enamoured of the wife of a knight, his neighbour; and how he obtained the lady's favours and was nearly caught with her, and with great difficulty made his escape, as you will hear later.

Apropos of the previous story, there lived formerly in Picardy—and I believe he is living there now—a gentleman who was so enamoured of the wife of a knight, his neighbour, that he deemed no day or hour happy if he were not with her, or at least had news of her;—and he was quite as dear to her—which is no small matter.

But the misfortune was that they could find no means of meeting secretly to open their hearts to each other, and in no case would they do so in the presence of a third person, however good a friend he or she might be.

At last, after many sad nights and days, Love, who aids and succours his loyal servants when he pleases, procured for them the much-desired day, when the poor husband,—the most jealous man living—was obliged to leave his house on account of some pressing business by which he would gain a large sum if he were present and would lose his money if he were absent. By gaining which sum he reaped an even better reward—that of being called a cuckold as well as a jealous man—for he had no sooner left his house than the gentleman, who was watching for no other quarry, popped into the house

and, without staying long, at once performed that for which he came, and received from his lady all that a lover can and dare demand; as pleasantly and as leisurely as they could both wish.

And they did not suppose that the husband would surprise them, but looked forward to a time of unalloyed pleasure, hoping that the night would complete that which the most joyful day—by far too short—had begun, and really believing that the poor devil of a husband could not return before dinner-time the following day at the earliest.

But it happened otherwise, for the devil brought him home. I know not, and care not to know how it was that he could get through his business so quickly, suffice it to say that he came back that night, at which the company—that is to say the two lovers—were much alarmed, and so taken by surprise (for they did not expect this inopportune return), that the poor gentleman could think of nothing else to do than to hide in the privy which was close to the chamber, hoping to escape by some means that his mistress would find before the knight came into the chamber.

It chanced that our knight, who that day had ridden sixteen or eighteen long leagues, was so tired and stiff that he would sup in his chamber, where he had his boots taken off, and would not go to the dining-hall.

You may guess that the poor gentleman paid dear for the pleasure he had had that day, for he was half dead with hunger, cold, and fear; and, to aggravate his misfortune, he was taken with such a horrible cough that it was wonderful that it was not heard in the chamber, where were assembled, the knight, the lady, and the other knights of the household.



The lady, whose eyes and ears were open for any sign of her lover, heard him by chance, and her heart sank within her, for she feared that her husband would hear also. Soon after supper, she found an opportunity to go to the privy, and told her lover to take care, for God's sake, and not cough like that.

"Alas, my dear," he said, "I cannot help it. God knows how I am punished. And for God's sake think of some way of getting me out of this."

"I will," she said, and with that she went away, and the good squire began his song over again, so loud indeed that he was much afraid he would be heard in the chamber; and might have been, had not the lady talked very loudly in order to drown the noise.

When the squire had this fresh attack of coughing, he knew of nothing better to do to prevent being heard than to stuff his head down the hole of the privy, where he was well "incensed," God knows, by the stuff therein, but he preferred that to being heard. In short, he was there a long time, with his head down the hole, spitting, sniffing, and coughing so much that it seemed as though he would never do anything else.

After this fit finished, the cough left him, and then he tried to draw out his head, but it was not in his power, so far had he pushed his shoulders through, and you may fancy that he was not very comfortable. In short he could not find means to get out, try as he would. He scraped his neck and nearly pulled his ears off, and in the end, by God's will, he pulled so hard that he tore away the seat of the privy, which hung round his neck. It was beyond his power to get out of it, but troublesome as it was, he preferred that to his previous position.

His mistress came and found him in this state and

was much astonished. She could not help him, and all the consolation she could give him was to tell him that she could find no means of getting him out of the house.

"Is that so?" he said. "Morableu! I am well armed to fight any one, but I must have a sword in my hand."

He was soon provided with a good one, and the lady seeing his extraordinary appearance, although her heart was full of doubt and uncertainty, could not refrain from laughing, and the squire also.

"Now I commend myself to God," he said. "I am going to try if I can get out of the house; but first black my face well."

She did so, and recommended him to God, and the poor fellow, with the seat of the privy round his neck, a drawn sword in his hand, and his face blacker than charcoal, sallied out into the room, and by luck, the first person he met was the husband, who was in such mortal fear at the sight of him—believing it was the Devil himself—that he tumbled full length on the floor and nearly broke his neck, and was for a long time in a swoon.

His wife, seeing him in this condition, came forward and pretending to show much more fear than she really felt, supported him in her arms, and asked him what was the matter. As soon as he came to himself, he said in broken accents, and with a piteous air:

"Did you see that devil I met?"

"Yes, I did," she replied, "and I nearly died of fright at the sight."

"Why does it come to our house?" he asked. "And who could have sent it? I shall not recover myself for a year or two, I have been so frightened."

"Nor shall I, by God," said the pious lady. "I believe

it must mean something. May God keep us and protect us from all evil fortune. My heart forebodes some mischief from this vision."

Everyone in the castle gave his or her version of the devil with a drawn sword, and they all believed it was a real devil. The good lady, who held the key of the mystery, was very glad to see them of that opinion. Ever after that the said devil continued to do the work that everyone does so willingly, though the husband, and everybody except a discreet waiting-woman, were ignorant of the fact.

LXXIII

THE BIRD IN THE CAGE

By JEHAN LAMBIN

Of a curé who was in love with the wife of one of his parishioners, with whom the said curé was found by the husband of the woman, the neighbours having given him warning—and how the curé escaped, as you will hear.

In the district of Saint Pol, in a village near that town, there formerly resided a worthy man, a labourer, married to a fair and buxom woman with whom the curé of the village was in love. He was burning with love for her, but he foresaw that his intentions might be suspected, and thought that the best way to win her would be to first gain the friendship of her husband.

He confided this opinion to the woman and asked her advice, and she replied that it was a very good plan to enable them to carry out their amorous intentions.

The curé, by flattery and subtle means, made the acquaintance of the good man, and managed him so well that he was always talking of “his curé,” and would not eat or do anything else without him. Every day he would have him to dinner and supper; in short, there was nothing done at the good man’s house without the curé being present. By this means he could come to the house as often as he pleased, and at whatever time he liked.

But the neighbours of this foolish labourer, seeing what he could not see, his eyes being bandaged by weak-

ness and confidence,—told him that it was not right and proper to have the curé at his house every day, and that, if it continued, his wife's reputation would suffer, these frequent visits having been noticed and spoken about by his neighbours and friends.

When the good man found himself thus sharply reproved by his neighbours for the frequent visits of the curé to his house, he was obliged to tell the curé that he must cease his constant calls, and forbade him by strict orders and menaces ever to come again until he was invited; affirming by a great oath that if ever he found the curé in his house there would be an account to settle between them, and it would not be pleasant for the visitor.

This prohibition displeased the curé more than I can tell you, but though vexed, he would not break off his love affair, for it was so deeply rooted in the hearts of both parties that it could not be easily eradicated. But hear how the curé managed after this prohibition. By an agreement with his mistress, he used to be informed of the times when her husband was absent, and then visit her. But he managed clumsily, for he could not pay his visits without the knowledge of the neighbours, who had been the cause of the interdict, and who were as much displeased at the curé's acts as though they had been personally concerned.

The good man was again informed that the curé used to come and put out the fire at his house every night,¹ as he did before he was forbidden. The foolish husband, hearing that, was much astonished and also angry, and to remedy this state of affairs, thought of the means which I will relate.

¹ That is to say: he came at curfew time.

He told his wife that he was going, on a certain day which he named, to take to St. Omer a waggon-load of corn, and that the work might be well done, was going himself. When the day named for his departure arrived, he did, as is usual in Picardy, especially round St. Omer, that is loaded his waggon of corn at midnight, and at that hour took leave of his wife and departed with his waggon.

As soon as he was gone, his wife closed all the doors of the house. Now you must know that the St. Omer to which our merchant was going was the house of one of his friends who lived at the other end of the village. He arrived there, put his waggon in the courtyard of the said friend—who knew all the business—and sent him to keep watch and listen round the house to see if any thief might come.

When he arrived, he concealed himself at the corner of a thick hedge, from which spot he could see all the doors of the house of the merchant, of whom he was the friend and servant.

Hardly had he taken his place than there arrived the curé, who had come to light his candle—or rather to put it out—and softly and secretly knocked at the door, which was soon opened by one who was not inclined to sleep at that time, who came down in her chemise, and let in her confessor, and then closed the door and led him to the place where her husband ought to have been.

The watcher, when he perceived what was done, left his post and went and informed the husband. Upon which news, the following plan was quickly arranged between them. The corn-merchant pretended to have returned from his journey on account of certain adventures which had, or might have, happened to him.

He knocked at the door, and shouted to his wife, who was much alarmed when she heard his voice, and made haste to conceal her lover, the curé, in a "casier" that was in the chamber; and you must know that a "casier" is a kind of pantry-cupboard, long and narrow and fairly deep, and very much like a trough

As soon as the curé was concealed amongst the eggs, butter, cheese, and other such victuals, the brave housewife, pretending to be half awake, half asleep, let in her husband, and said:

"Oh, my dear husband, what can have happened that you have returned so quickly? There must be some reason why you did not go on your journey—for God's sake tell it me quickly!"

The good man, who was as angry as he could be, although he did not show it, insisted on going to their bedroom and there telling her the cause of his sudden return. When he was where he expected to find the curé, that is to say in the bedroom, he began to relate his reasons for breaking his journey. Firstly, he said he had such suspicion of her virtue that he feared much to be numbered amongst the blue vestments,¹ or "our friends," as they are commonly called, and that it was because of this suspicion that he had returned so quickly. Also that when he was out of the house it had occurred to his mind that the curé was his deputy whilst he was away. So to put his suspicions to the test, he had come back, and now wanted the candle to see whether his wife had been sleeping alone during his absence.

¹ In the present day, yellow is the emblematic colour for jealous or cuckolded husbands, but it would appear from this passage that in the 15th century it was blue—possibly, Bibliophile Jacob thinks, from its being the colour of the "maquereau."

When he had finished relating the causes of his return, the good woman cried:

"Oh, my dear husband, whence comes this baseless jealousy? Have you ever seen in my conduct anything that should not be seen in that of a good, faithful, and virtuous wife? Cursed be the hour I first knew you, since you suspect me of that which my heart could never imagine. You know me badly if you do not know how clean and pure my heart is, and will remain."

The good man paid little heed to these words, but said that he wished to allay his suspicions, and to at once inspect every corner of the chamber as well as possible,—but he did not find what he sought.

Then he caught sight of the "casier," and he guessed that the man he wanted was inside, but he made no sign, and calling his wife, said:

"My dear, I was wrong to presume that you were untrue to me and such as my false suspicions imagined. Nevertheless, I am so obstinate in my opinions that it would be impossible for me to live comfortably with you henceforth. And therefore I hope you will agree that a separation should be made between us, and that we divide our goods equally in a friendly manner."

The wench, who was pleased with this arrangement, in order that she might more easily see her curé, agreed with scarcely any difficulty to her husband's request, but she made it a condition that in the division of the furniture she should have first choice.

"And why," said the husband, "should you have first choice? It is against all right and justice."

They were a long time squabbling about first choice, but in the end the husband won, and took the "casier" in which there was nothing but custards, tarts, cheeses, and

other light provisions, amongst which was the good curé buried, and he heard all the discussion that went on.

When the husband chose the "casier," his wife chose the copper; then the husband chose another article, then she chose; and so on until all the articles were apportioned out.

After the division was made, the husband said:

"I will allow you to live in my house until you have found another lodging, but I am going now to take my share of the furniture and put it in the house of one of my neighbours."

"Do so," she said, "when you like."

He took a good cord and tightly tied up the "casier"; then sent for his waggoner and told him to put the "casier" on a horse's back and take it to the house of a certain neighbour.

The good woman heard these orders, but did not dare to interfere, for she feared that if she did, it would not advance matters, but perhaps cause the "casier" to be opened, so she trusted to luck.

The "casier" was placed on the horse and taken through the streets to the house the good man had mentioned. But they had not gone far before the curé, who was choked and blinded with eggs and butter, cried:

"For God's sake! mercy!"

The waggoner, much frightened at hearing this piteous appeal, jumped off the horse and called the servants and his master, and they opened the "casier," and found the poor prisoner all smeared and be-yellowed with eggs, cheese, milk, and more than a hundred other things; indeed it would have been hard to say which there was most of,—in such a pitiable condition was the poor lover.

When the husband saw him in that state, he could

not help laughing, although he felt angry. He let him go, and then went back to his wife to tell her that he had not been wrong in suspecting her of unchastity. She, seeing herself fairly caught, begged for mercy, and was pardoned on this condition, that if ever the case occurred again, she should be better advised than to put her lover in the "casier," for the curé had stood a good chance of being killed.

After that they lived together for a long time, and the husband brought back his "casier," but I do not think that the curé was ever found in it again, but ever after that adventure he was known, and still is, as "Sire Vadin Casier."

LXXIV

THE OBSEQUIOUS PRIEST

By PHILIPPE DE LAON

Of a priest of Boulogne who twice raised the body of Our Lord whilst chanting a Mass, because he believed that the Seneschal of Boulogne had come late to the Mass, and how he refused to take the Pax until the Seneschal had done so, as you will hear hereafter.

Once when the Seneschal of the County of Boulogne was travelling through the district visiting each town, he passed through a hamlet where the bell was ringing for Mass, and as he expected that he should not reach the town to which he was going in time to hear Mass, for the hour was then nearly noon, he thought that he would dismount at this hamlet to see God in passing.

He left his horse at the door of the church, and took a seat near the altar, where high Mass was being celebrated, and placed himself so near the priest, that the latter could see his profile whilst he was celebrating the Mass.

When he raised the cup, and other things that he should, he thought to himself that he had noticed the Seneschal behind him, and not knowing whether he had come early enough to see the elevation, but believing that he had come too late, the priest called his clerk, and made him light the candles, and, performing all the ceremonies that he should, he again raised the Host, saying that that was for Monseigneur le Seneschal.

And after that he proceeded until he came to the "Agnus Dei" which, when he had said three times, and his clerk gave him the Pax to kiss, he refused, approaching his clerk and saying that he should first present it to the Seneschal, who refused it two or three times.

When the priest saw that the Seneschal would not take the Pax before him, he put down the Host which he had in his hands and took the Pax, which he carried to my lord the Seneschal, and told him that if my lord did not take it first, he would not take it himself.

"For it is not right," said the priest, "that I should take the Pax before you."

Then the Seneschal, seeing that wisdom was not to be found in that place, gave in to the curé and took the Pax first, and the curé followed him; and that being done, he returned to perform the rest of the Mass.

And this is all that was related to me.

LXXV

THE BAGPIPE

By MONSEIGNEUR DE THALEMAS

*Of a hare-brained, half-mad fellow who ran a great risk of being put to death by being hanged on a gibbet in order to injure and annoy the Bailli, justices, and other notables of the city of Troyes in Champagne, by whom he was mortally hated, as will appear more plainly hereafter.*¹

In the time of the war between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs,² there happened at Troyes in Champagne, a rather curious incident which is well worth being recorded, and which was as follows:

The people of Troyes, though they had been Burgundians, had joined the Armagnacs, and amongst them there had formerly lived a fellow who was half mad, for he had not entirely lost his senses, though his words and actions showed more folly than good sense—nevertheless he would sometimes say and do things which a wiser man than he could not have bettered. To begin the story, however: this fellow who was in garrison with the Burgundians at Sainte Menehould, one day told his companions that if they would listen to him, he would teach them how to catch a batch of the yokels of Troyes,

¹ Gui, Seigneur de Thalemas, died, without issue, in 1463.

² The reign of Charles VI., after the assassination of the Duc d'Orléans by Jean-sans-Peur, was marked by a long civil war between the factions here named, and who each in turn called in the aid of the English.

whom, in truth, he hated mortally, and they hardly loved him, for they had always threatened to hang him if they caught him. This is what he said:

"I will go to Troyes and will approach the fortifications, and will pretend to be spying round the town, and will measure the moat with my lance, and will get so near the town that I shall be taken prisoner. I am sure that as soon as the good 'bailli' gets hold of me, he will condemn me to be hanged, and there is no one in the town who will take my part, for they all hate me. So, early the next morning, I shall be taken out to the gibbet,¹ and you will all be hidden in the thicket which is near the gibbet. And as soon as you see me arrive with the procession, you will spring out upon them, and take whom you like, and deliver me out of their hands." All his companions in garrison with him agreed to this willingly, and told him that if he would dare this adventure, they would assist him to the best of their power.

To shorten the story, the simpleton went to Troyes as he had said, and, as he desired, he was taken prisoner. The report soon spread through the town, and there was no one who did not say he ought to be hanged; even the Bailli, as soon as he saw him, swore by all his gods that he should be hanged by the neck.

"Alas! monseigneur," said the poor fool, "I pray for mercy. I have done nothing wrong."

"You lie, scoundrel," said the Bailli. "You have guided the Burgundians into this district, and you have accused the citizens and merchants of this city. You shall have your reward, for you shall be hanged on a gibbet."

¹ The gibbet was usually outside the town, often at some considerable distance from the walls.

"For God's sake then, monseigneur," said the poor fellow; "since I must die, at least let it please you that it be in the early morning; so that, as I have many acquaintances in the town, I may not be held up to public opprobrium."

"Very well," said the Bailli, "I will think about it."

The next morning at daybreak, the hangman with his cart came to the prison, and hardly had he arrived than there came the Bailli with his sergeants, and a great crowd of people to accompany them, and the poor fellow was laid, bound, on the cart, and still holding the bagpipe he was accustomed to play. Thus he was led to the gibbet, accompanied by a larger crowd than most have at their hanging, so much was he hated in the town.

Now you must know that his comrades of the garrison of Sainte Menehould had not forgotten their ambushade, and ever since midnight had been collected near the gibbet, to save their friend, although he was not otherwise, and also to capture prisoners and whatever else they could. When they arrived, they took up their position and put a sentinel in a tree to watch when the Troyes folk should be gathered round the gibbet. The sentinel was placed in his position, and promised that he would keep a good watch.

Then all the crowd came to the gibbet, and the Bailli gave order to despatch the poor fool, who for his part wondered where his comrades were, and why they did not rush out on these rascally Armagnacs.

He did not feel at all comfortable, and he looked all round, but chiefly towards the wood, but he heard nothing. He made his confession last as long as he could, but at last the priest went away, and the poor fellow had to mount the ladder, and from this elevated position, God

knows that he looked often towards the wood; but it was of no avail, for the sentinel, who was to give the signal when the men were to rush out, had gone to sleep in the tree.

The poor fellow did not know what to say or do, and verily believed that his last hour had come. The hangman began to make preparations to put the noose round the victim's neck, who, when he saw that, bethought him of a trick, which turned out well for him, and said:

"Monseigneur le Bailli, I beg you for God's sake, that before the hangman lays hands on me, I may be allowed to play a tune on my bagpipe. That is all I ask; after that I shall be ready to die, and I pardon you and all the others for having caused by death."

His request was granted, and the bagpipe was handed up to him. As soon as he had it, he began, as leisurely as he could, to play an air which all his comrades knew very well, and which was called: "You stay too long, Robin; you stay too long."

At the sound of the bagpipe the sentinel woke, and was so startled that he tumbled out of the tree to the ground, and cried:

"They are hanging our comrade! Forward! Forward! make haste!"

His comrades were ready, and at the sound of the trumpet they sallied out of the wood, and rushed upon the Bailli and all the others who were round the gibbet.

The hangman was too frightened to put the rope round the man's neck and push him off the ladder, but begged for his own life, which the other would willingly have granted, but it was not in his power. The victim, however, did something better, for from his place on the

ladder, he called out to his comrades: "Capture that man, he is rich; and that one, he is dangerous."

In short, the Burgundians killed a great number of those who had come out of Troyes, and captured many others, and saved their man, as you have heard, but he said that never in all his life had he had such a narrow escape as on that occasion.

LXXVI

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

By PHILIPPE DE LAON

Of the chaplain to a knight of Burgundy who was enamoured of the wench of the said knight, and of the adventure which happened on account of his amour, as you will hear below.¹

I have often heard related, by people worthy of credit, a curious history, which will furnish me a tale without my adding or suppressing one word that is not needed.

Amongst the knights of Burgundy was formerly one, who, contrary to the custom of the country, kept in his castle—which I will not name—a fair wench to serve as his mistress.

His chaplain, who was young and frisky, seeing this nice wench, was not so virtuous but that he felt tempted, and fell in love with her, and when he saw his opportunity, told her of his love. The damsel, who was as sharp as mustard, for she had knocked about so much that no one in the world knew more than she did, thought to herself that if she granted the priest's request, her master would hear of it, however much she tried to conceal it, and thus she would lose the greater for the less.

So she determined to relate the affair to her master, who, when he heard of it, did nothing but laugh, for he had partly suspected it, having noticed the looks, con-

¹ Taken from the *Facetiæ* of Poggio.

versation and little love-tricks that passed between the two. Nevertheless, he ordered the wench to lead the priest on, without, however, granting him her favours; and she did it so well that the priest fell into the trap. The knight used often to say to him:

"By God, sir, you are too friendly with my chamber-wench. I do not know what there is between you two, but if it is anything to my prejudice, by Our Lady, I will punish the two of you."

"In truth, monseigneur," replied the Dominie, "I do not pretend to expect anything from her. I talk to her to pass the time, as everyone else in the house does, but never in my life would I seek her love, or anything of the kind."

"Very well," said the lord, "if it were otherwise I should not be best pleased."

If the Dominie had importuned her before, he now pursued her more than ever, and wherever he met the wench he pressed her so closely that she was obliged, whether she would or not, to listen to his requests, and, being cunning and deceitful, she so played with the priest and encouraged his love, that for her sake he would have fought Ogier the Dane himself.

As soon as she had felt him, the whole conversation that had passed between them was related to her master.

To make the farce more amusing, and to deceive his chaplain, he ordered the girl to appoint a night for him to be in the "ruelle" of the bed where they slept. She was to say to him: "As soon as monseigneur is asleep, I will do what you want; come quietly into the 'ruelle' of the bed."

"And you must," he said, "let him do what he likes, and so will I; and I am sure that when he believes I am

asleep, that he will soon have his arms round you, and I will have ready, near your —, a noose in which he will be nicely caught.”

The wench was very joyful and satisfied with this arrangement, and gave the message to the Dominie, who never in his life had been more delighted, and, without thinking of or imagining peril or danger, entered his master's chamber, where the wench and his master slept. He cast all sense and decency to the winds and only thought of satisfying his foolish lust,—albeit it was quite natural.

To cut the story short, Master Priest came at the hour appointed, and crept quietly enough, God knows, into the “ruelle” of the bed, and his mistress whispered to him:

“Don't say a word: when monsieur is fast asleep I will touch you, and then come to me.”

“Very good,” he replied.

The good knight, who was not asleep, had a great inclination to laugh, but checked himself, in order not to spoil the joke. As he had proposed and arranged, he spread his noose where he wished, that is to say round the spot where the priest wanted to get.

All being ready, the Dominie was called, and as gently as he could, slipped into the bed, and without more ado, mounted on the heap in order to see the farther.¹

As soon as he was lodged there, the good knight drew the cord tightly, and said aloud:

“Ha! scoundrelly priest, is that the sort of man you are?”

¹ A proverbial expression founded perhaps on some old story which may be alluded to also in the 12th and 82nd stories.



LXXVI

GLADY TIGER

The priest tried to run away, but he could not go far, for the instrument he had tried to tune to the girl's fiddle, was caught in the noose, at which he was much frightened, and did not know what had happened to him. His master pulled the cord more tightly, which would have given him great pain if his fear and alarm had not conquered all other sentiments.

In a few moments he came to himself, and felt the pain and cried piteously for mercy to his master, who had such a strong desire to laugh that he could scarcely speak. He pulled the priest into the room and said:

"Get out, and never come here again! I pardon you in this occasion, but the second time I shall be inexorable!"

"Oh, monsieur," he replied, "I will never do it again. It is all her fault," and with that he ran away and the knight went to bed again, and finished what the other had begun.

But you must know that never again was the priest found trespassing on his master's preserves. Perhaps, as a recompense for his misfortunes, the girl afterwards took pity on him, and to ease her conscience lent him her fiddle, and he tuned it so well that the master suffered both in goods and honour. But now I will say no more, and end my story.

LXXVII

THE SLEEVELESS ROBE

By ALARDIN

Of a gentleman of Flanders who went to reside in France, but whilst he was there his mother was very ill in Flanders; and how he often went to visit her, believing that she would die, and what he said and how he behaved, as you will hear later.

A gentleman of Flanders had a mother who was very old and much weakened by disease, and more sick and infirm than any woman of her age.

Hoping that she would get better and be cured, he often came to see her, although he resided in France, and each time that he came he found her suffering so much that he thought her soul was about to leave her body.

On one occasion that he came to see her, she said to him at his departure:

“Adieu, my son; I am sure that you will never see me again, for I am about to die.”

“Devil take it, mother, you have said that so often that I am sick of it. For three years past you have been repeating that, but you have done nothing of the kind. Choose a day, I beg, and keep to it.”

The good woman, when she heard her son’s reply, smiled, though she was so sick and old, and said farewell.

One year, then two years, passed, and still she lingered on. She was again visited by her son, and one night when he was in bed in her house, and she was so ill that all believed she was about to go to Mortaigne,¹ those who watched her, called her son, and told him to come to his mother quickly, for that certainly she was about to die.

"Do you say that she is about to die?" he replied. "By my soul, I will not believe it; she always says that, but she never does it."

"No, no," said the nurses; "this time it is certain. Come quickly, for it is sure that she is dying."

"Very well, you go first and I will follow you; and tell my mother that if she must go, not to go by Douai, for the road is so bad that I and my horses were nearly swallowed up yesterday."

Nevertheless he rose, and put on his dressing-gown, and went off to see his mother give her last grin. When he came, he found her very ill, for she had been in a swoon which all thought would carry her off, but, thank God, she was now a little better.

"Did I not tell you so?" said this good son. "Everybody in this house declares, and she does herself, that she is dying—but nothing comes of it. For God's sake choose a day—as I have often told you—and see that you keep to it! I am going to return whence I came, and I recommend you not to call me again. If she does die she must die alone, for I will not keep her company."

Now I must tell you the end of this history. The lady, ill as she was, recovered from this extreme sickness, and lived and languished as before for the space of three

¹ Mild puns on the names of places were very common in the Middle Ages.

years, during which time her good son visited her once, and that was just as she was about to give up the ghost. But when they came to seek him to come to her death-bed, he was trying on a new habit and would not come. Message after message was sent to him, for his good mother, who was nearing her end, wished to recommend her soul to her son's care,—but to all the messages he replied:

“I am sure there is no hurry: she will wait till my habit is finished.”

At last so many remonstrances were made to him that he went to his mother, wearing a doublet with no sleeves to it, which, when she saw, she asked him where were the sleeves.

“They are within there,—waiting to be finished as soon as you clear out of the place.”

“Then they will be soon finished,” she replied; “for I go to God, to whom I humbly recommend my soul; and to you also, my son.”

Without another word she rendered her soul to God, with the Cross between her arms; on seeing which her good son began to weep so loudly that no one had ever heard the like; he could not be comforted, and at the end of a fortnight he died of grief.

LXXVIII

THE HUSBAND TURNED CONFESSOR

By JEHAN MARTIN

*Of a married gentleman who made many long voyages, during which his good and virtuous wife made the acquaintance of three good fellows, as you will hear; and how she confessed her amours to her husband when he returned from his travels, thinking she was confessing to the priest, and how she excused herself, as will appear.*¹

The province of Brabant is a fair and pleasant land, well provided with pretty girls, who are generally clever and good; but as for the men, it is said of them, with a good deal of truth, that the longer they live, the greater fools they become.

There was formerly a gentleman of this land who—being thereunto born and destined—travelled much beyond seas to various places, as Cyprus, Rhodes, and the adjacent parts, and at last came to Jerusalem, where he received the order of knighthood.

During the time that he was away, his good wife was not idle, but took her “quoniam” with three lovers, who like courtiers, each had audience in turn and for a certain time.

First came a gentle squire, fresh and frisky, and in good health, who spent so much upon her, physically

¹ This story is originally found in Boccaccio (Dec. day VII, nov V.), and in an old fabliau: “Le Chevalier qui fist sa femme confesser.” La Fontaine has imitated it. See note on No. 82.

and pecuniarily, (for in truth she plucked him well), that at last he was sick of it and left her altogether.

The one who came after him was a knight, and a man of a great reputation, who was very glad to have acquired the succession, and worked her as well as he could, paying his "quibus,"¹ which no one knew better than this lusty wench how to get out of a man. In short, if the squire, who had previously held the position, had been plucked, the knight was not less so, until at last he turned tail, took leave of her, and left the place open to the next comer.

As a titbit to finish with, the damsel made the acquaintance of a rich priest, and although he was cunning enough, and not over liberal with money, he was despoiled of rich gowns, vessels, and other valuables.

Now it happened, thank God, that the husband of the wench let her know that he was coming home; and how he had been made a knight at Jerusalem. His good wife had the house cleaned and prepared as well as possible. Everything was ready for his return, except the lady, and she was somewhat disturbed on account of the vast quantity of booty—tapestry, furniture, vessels, and other valuables—which she had gained upon her back.

When her husband arrived, God knows what a joyful reception he had, especially from the one who cared least about him, that is to say his worthy wife.

I pass over all the welcomings, but her husband, although he was a fool, could not help quickly noticing the heap of furniture, which was not there at his departure. He went to the coffers, the buffets, and a number of other places, and everywhere he found his store in-

¹ Property or wealth; the expression is still used in familiar conversation.

creased, and the sight of all this booty filled his mind with evil thoughts, and in a hot temper, he called for his wife, and demanded to know whence had come all these goods I have already named.

"By St. John," said the lady, "that is a nice question. You have good reason to go on like this and get so warm. To look at you, one would think you were cross."

"I am not in the best of tempers," he replied; "for I did not leave you so much money that you could have saved enough to buy all these utensils, hangings, and the other things that I find here. I suspect, with good reason, that our household has been increased by some friend of yours during my absence."

"By God!" replied the lady, "you are wrong to suspect me of such misconduct. I would have you to know that I am not a woman of that kind, but a better wife in every respect than you deserve; and it is not right that after all the trouble I have taken to save and economise to embellish and adorn your house and mine, that I should be reprovèd and scolded. That is not at all the sort of reward that a good husband should give to a chaste wife such as you have, you wicked wretch. It is a great pity I have not been unfaithful to you, and I would be if I did not value my honour and my soul."

This quarrel, though it lasted a long while, ceased for a time, for the husband thought of a plan how to find out the truth about his wife. He arranged with the curé, who was a great friend of his, that he should hear her confession, and this he did with the help of the curé, who managed the whole affair, for one morning in Easter week, the curé made the husband put on the priest's robe, and then sent word to the lady to come and confess.

It need not be asked if the husband was glad when he

found himself thus disguised. He went to the chapel, and entered the confessional without saying a word; his wife approached and knelt at his feet, really believing she was confessing to the curé, and said "Benedicite." To this her husband replied "Dominus," as the curé had taught him, and whatever else was necessary, as well as he could manage it.

After the good woman had made a general confession, she descended to particulars and told how, during the time that her husband had been away, a squire had been his deputy, and from him she had acquired much property, in gold, in silver, and in furniture.

God knows that the husband, when he heard this confession, did not feel very comfortable; he would willingly have killed her on the spot if he had dared, nevertheless he was patient, in order that he might hear the rest.

When she had said all there was to say about the squire, she accused herself of misconduct with the knight, who, like his predecessor, had paid her well. The good husband, nearly bursting with grief, had a good mind to discover himself and give her absolution without more ado, but he did nothing of the kind, and waited to hear what more she would say.

After the knight came the turn of the priest, and at this the good husband lost patience and would hear no more; he threw aside hood and gown, and, showing himself, said:

"False and perfidious woman! now I see and know your treason! And would not a squire and a knight suffice you, but you must give yourself up to a priest? This vexes me more than all the other sins you have committed."

For a moment this brave dame was taken aback, but soon recovered her confidence, and with a face as calm as though she had been the most just and virtuous woman in the world, saying her prayers to God, she replied as calmly as though the Holy Spirit had inspired her:

"Poor fool! why do you thus worry yourself, you know not wherefore? Listen to me, if you please; and be assured that I knew perfectly well that I was confessing to you. I served you as you deserved, and without one word of falsehood confessed to you the real circumstances. These are the facts: you are the squire who slept with me, for when I married you, you were a squire, and did with me as you wished; you are the knight of whom I spoke, for on your return you made me a lady; and you are the priest also, for no one who is not a priest can hear a confession."

"By my oath, my dear," he replied, "you have convinced me, and proved to me that you are a virtuous woman and that I was wrong to accuse you. I repent, and ask your pardon, and promise never to suspect you again."

"I willingly pardon you," said his wife, "since you confess your fault."

Thus, as you have heard, was the good knight deceived by the ready wit of his wife.

LXXIX

THE LOST ASS FOUND

By MICHAULT DE CHANGY

Of a good man of Bourbonnais who went to seek the advice of a wise man of that place about an ass that he had lost, and how he believed that he miraculously recovered the said ass, as you will hear hereafter.¹

In the fair land of Bourbonnais, where many good professions are carried on, there lived, not long ago, a doctor of God knows what sort, for never Hippocrates or Galen practised the science as he did. For instead of syrups, decoctions, electuaries, and the hundred thousand other things that physicians order to preserve the health of man, or restore it if it is lost, this good doctor of whom I am speaking had only one method of procedure, and that was to order clysters. Whatever matter was brought to him,² he always exhibited clysters, and generally so well did this remedy turn out that everyone was satisfied with him, and he cured them all, so that his fame spread abroad and increased in such a manner that he was called "Master" Jehan³ by all, both in the houses of princes and lords, and in the great abbeys, and in the towns, and never was Aristotle or Galen so honoured, especially by the common people, as was our said Master. And his fame so increased that his

¹ Taken from the *Facetiæ* of Poggio.

² It was usual to bring the urine of an invalid to the physician.

³ "Master" was then a title of honour.

advice was asked on every subject, and he was so incessantly in demand that he did not know what to do. If a woman had a bad, or whimsical, or capricious husband, she went to this good master for a remedy. In short, if any could give good advice it was thought that our physician was at the top of the tree in that respect, and people came to him from all parts to enquire about lost property.

It happened one day that a poor foolish countryman had lost his ass, and after seeking for it a long time, he determined to go to the wise man, who when he arrived was so surrounded by people that the countryman could not make himself heard. At last he broke through the crowd, and, in the presence of many persons, related his case, that is to say that he had lost his ass, and asked the doctor to get it back for him.

The master, who was listening to others more than to him, just heard the sound of the words, and thinking he had some infirmity, turned towards him, and in order to get rid of him, said to his servants:

“Give him a clyster!”

The poor man who had lost his ass did not know what the master had said, but he was seized by the physician’s servants, who led him away and gave him a clyster—at which he was much astonished, for he did not know what it was.

When he had this clyster in his belly, he went away, without saying anything more about his ass, which he fully believed he should recover.

He had not gone far when his belly was so tossed about that he was forced to turn aside into a deserted hut, because of the clyster which demanded to be let out. And when he began, he made such a terrible noise, that

his ass, which chanced to be straying near, began to bray, and the good man rose up and cried: "Te Deum laudamus," and went to his ass, which he believed he had found by means of the clyster which he had had from the Master, who after that had incomparably more renown than ever; for he was looked upon as the sure finder of all lost goods, and the perfect master of all science, and all this fame sprang from a single clyster.

Thus have you heard how the ass was found by means of a clyster; it is a manifest fact, and one that often happens.

LXXX

GOOD MEASURE!

By MICHAULT DE CHANGY

*Of a young German girl, aged fifteen or sixteen or thereabouts who was married to a gentle gallant, and who complained that her husband was too small for her liking, because she had seen a young ass only six months old which was much bigger than her husband, who was twenty-five years old.*¹

I have heard it related as true by two noble lords worthy of faith and belief, that on the borders of Germany there lived a young girl, who at the age of about 15 or 16 years was married to a worthy gentleman, who did his best to satisfy the demands which, without saying a word, all girls of that age and condition earnestly ask for. But though the poor man did his duty well, and indeed more often than he should, the performance was never agreeable to his wife, who was always sulky, and often wept as sadly as though all her friends were dead.

Her good husband, seeing her thus lament, could not imagine what she could want, and asked her tenderly:

"What is the matter, my dear? Are you not as well clothed, lodged, and served, as people in our position of life can reasonably expect to be?"

"It is not that which vexes me," she replied.

"Then what can it be?" he asked. "Tell me, and if I

¹ Taken from the *Facetiæ* of Poggio.

can remedy it, I will, at whatever cost to my purse or person."

Generally, she did not reply, but still sulked, and looked miserable, at which her husband lost his patience, finding she would not tell him the cause of her grief. But he enquired so often that at last he learned partly what was the matter, for she told him that she was vexed because he was so poorly furnished with you-know-what—that is to say the stick with which you plant men, as Boccaccio calls it.

"Indeed!" said he, "and is that why you grieve? By St. Martin, you have good cause! At any rate it cannot be other than it is, and you must put up with it, since you cannot change it."

This condition of affairs lasted a long time, till the husband, tired of her obstinacy, one day invited to dinner a great number of her friends, and stated the facts which have been already related, and said that it seemed to him that she had no particular cause to grieve, for he believed he was as well furnished with a natural instrument as any of his neighbours.

"And that I may be the better believed," he said, "and that you may see how wrong she is, I will show it you all."

With that he laid his furniture on the table before all the men and women there assembled, and said: "There it is!" and his wife wept louder than ever.

"By St. John!" said her mother, her sister, her aunt, her cousin, and her neighbour, "you are wrong, my dear! What do you ask? Do you expect more? Who would not be satisfied with a husband so furnished? So help me God, I should deem myself very happy to have as much, or indeed less. Be comforted and enjoy

yourself in future! By God, you are better off than any of us, I believe!"

The young bride, hearing all the women thus speak, replied, still weeping loudly:

"There is a little ass in the house, hardly half a year old, and who has an instrument as big, as thick, and as long as your arm,"—and so saying she held her arm by the elbow and shook it up and down—"and my husband, who is quite 24 years old, has but that little bit he has shown you. Do you think I ought to be satisfied?"

Everyone began to laugh, and she to weep the more, so that for a long time not a word was said by any of the company. Then her mother took the girl aside, and said one thing and another to her, and left her satisfied after a great deal of trouble.

That is the way with the girls in Germany—if God pleases, it will soon be the same also in France.

LXXXI

BETWEEN TWO STOOLS

By MONSEIGNEUR DE VAURIN

*Of a noble knight who was in love with a beautiful young married lady, and thought himself in her good graces, and also in those of another lady, her neighbour; but lost both as is afterwards recorded.*¹

As all the stories of asses are now finished, I will relate shortly a true story of a knight whom many of you noble lords have long known.

It is true that this knight was greatly in love—as is often the way with young men—with a beautiful and noble young lady, who, in that part of the country where she lived was renowned for her beauty. Nevertheless, try what means he could to obtain her favours and become her accepted lover, he could not succeed—at which he was much displeased, seeing that never was woman loved more ardently, loyally, and wholly than she was. Nor should I omit to say that he did as much for her as ever lover did for his lady, such as jousts, expensive habiliments, etc.—nevertheless, as has been said, he found her always brusque and averse, and showing him less love than she reasonably should, for she knew for a fact that she was loyally and dearly loved by him. And, to say truth, she was too harsh to him, which, it is

¹ By M. de Waulvrin (Vaurin), Chamberlain to the Duke of Burgundy. He wrote a history of England and France from the earliest times to 1471. Also contributed No. 83.

to be believed, proceeded from pride, of which she had too much—it might even be said, with which she was filled.

Matters were in this condition, when another lady, a friend and neighbour of the first-named damsel, seeing how enamoured the knight was, fell in love with him herself, and by various honest ways and means which would take too long to describe, so subtilly managed that in a short time the knight perceived her love, at which he was much vexed, his heart being wholly given to his harsh and cruel mistress.

Being not only kind, but possessed of much common sense, he managed adroitly not to compromise himself, so that if his second love affair had come to the knowledge of his first mistress, she would have no cause to blame his conduct.

Now listen to the end of his amours. Owing to the distance at which he lived, he could not so often see his lady-love as his trusting and loving heart desired. So he determined one day to ask certain knights and squires, good friends of his, but who knew nothing about his love affairs, to fly their hawks, and hunt the hare in the district in which the lady resided, knowing for a fact by his spies, that her husband was away, having gone to Court, as he often did.

As had been arranged, the love-sick knight and his companions started the next day, early in the morning, from the town where the Court was, and passed the time until the late afternoon in hunting the hare, and without eating or drinking. They snatched a hasty repast in a little village, and after the dinner, which was short and simple, remounted their horses and continued to hunt the hare.

The good knight, who had only one object in view, led his companions from the city, to which they always wished to return, and they said to him: "The hour of vespers is near and it is time to return to the town. If we do not take care we shall be locked out, and have to stay the night in some miserable village and all die of hunger."

"Don't be alarmed," said the lover; "there is plenty of time, and at the worst, I know a place near here where we shall be very welcome, and I suppose you will have no objection to meeting ladies."

Being all courtiers, they were not at all disinclined to meet ladies, and were satisfied to leave the matter in his hands, and continued to hunt the hare and the partridge as long as daylight lasted.

When it was time to think of finding lodgings, the knight said to his companions:

"Come along, come along! I will lead you to the place."

About an hour or two after nightfall, the knight and his comrades arrived at the place where lived the lady with whom the guide of this little band was so enamoured that he could not sleep o' nights.

They knocked at the door of the castle, and the varlets quickly came and asked them what they wanted. And he who was the most deeply concerned answered and said:

"Gentlemen, are my lord and my lady at home?"

"Truly," replied one of the attendants for all the others, "my lord is not here, but my lady is."

"Tell her, if you please, that such and such knights and squires of the Court, and I, so-and-so, have been hunting the hare in this part of the country, and have

lost our way, and now it is too late to return to the town. We beg her therefore to receive us as her guests for this night."

"Willingly will I tell her," said the other.

He went and delivered this message to his mistress, who, instead of coming to the gentlemen, sent a message, which the servant thus delivered:

"Monseigneur," said the varlet, "my lady wishes me to inform you that her husband is not here; at which she is much vexed, for if he had been he would have given you a hearty welcome; but in his absence she does not dare to receive visitors, and begs you therefore to pardon her."

The knight, who had led the expedition, was, you may imagine, much vexed and ashamed to hear this reply, for he expected to have seen his mistress, and had a pleasant time with her, and emptied his heart to her, and he was annoyed that he had brought his companions to a place where he had boasted they would be well received.

Like a wise and noble knight, he did not show what he felt in his heart, but with a calm countenance, said to his comrades:

"Gentlemen, pardon me that I have lured you with false hopes. I did not believe that the ladies of this part of the country were so wanting in courtesy as to refuse a lodging to wandering knights. But have a little patience. I promise you on my word, to take you somewhere—not far from here—where we shall have quite a different welcome."

"Forward then!" said all the others. "May God give us good luck."

They set off, under the direction of their guide, to take them to the house of the lady by whom he was es-

teemed, though he did not return her affection as he ought to have done; but now he determined to devote to her the love which had been so roughly refused by his first mistress, and he determined to love, serve, and obey her who loved him so, and with whom, please God, he would soon be.

To shorten the story, after riding for a good hour and a half with the drenching rain on their backs, they came to the house of the lady who has previously been mentioned, and gaily knocked at the door, for it was very late,—between nine and ten o'clock at night, and they much feared that all the household would be in bed. Varlets and servant-maids at once came forth, and asked, "Who is there?" and they were told.

They went at once to their mistress, who was then in her petticoat, and had put on her nightcap, and said:

"Madame, my lord so-and-so is at the gate and would fain enter; and with him certain knights and squires of the Court to the number of three."

"They are very welcome," she said. "Up quickly, all of you! Kill some capons and fowls, and let us have a good supper, and quickly."

In short, she gave her orders like the great lady that she was—and still is—and all obeyed her commands. She quickly put on her night-dress, and thus attired, came forward, as courteously as possible, to meet the gentlemen, with two torches carried before her, and only accompanied by one waiting-woman, and her beautiful daughter—all the other women being employed in preparing the chambers.

She met her guests upon the drawbridge of the castle, and the noble knight who was the guide and spokesman of the others, came forward and expressed his

gratitude for her kindness, and kissed her, and all the others did the same after him.

Then like a courteous woman of the world, she said to the lords:

"Gentlemen, you are very welcome. Monseigneur So-and-so (that is to say their guide) I have known a long time. He is very welcome here, and I should be glad to make the acquaintance of you other gentlemen."

These introductions were made, the supper was soon ready, and each of the gentlemen lodged in a fair and fine chamber, well appointed and furnished with hangings and everything necessary.

It should be mentioned also, that whilst supper was preparing, the lady and the good knight had a long talk together, and arranged that they would only require one bed between them that night; her husband by good luck not being in the house, but forty leagues away.

We will leave them enjoying their supper after the adventures of the day, and return to the lady who refused to receive the little band, even the man whom she knew loved her better than anyone else in the world, and had shown herself so discourteous.

She asked her servants, when they returned from delivering her message, what the knight had said.

One of them replied: "Madame, he said very little; only that he would take his friends to a place where they would have a hearty welcome and good cheer."

She quickly guessed where they had gone, and said to herself: "Ah, he has gone to the house of such an one, who, I know, will not be sorry to see him, and no doubt they are now plotting against me."

Whilst she was thinking thus, the harshness and unkindness which she had felt towards her faithful lover,

melted away or was transformed into hearty affection and good-will, and she longed to bestow upon her lover whatever he might ask or require. So she at once set to work and suspecting that the lady to whom they had gone was now enjoying the society of the man she had treated so rudely, she penned a letter to her lover, most of the lines of which were written in her most precious blood, to the effect that as soon as he saw this letter, he should set all other matters aside, and follow the bearer of the missive, and he would be so kindly received that no lover in the world could expect more from his mistress. And as a token of her truth, she placed inside the letter a diamond ring he well knew.

The bearer of this missive, who was a trustworthy man, went to the castle where the knight was sitting at supper next to the hostess, and with all the guests seated round the table. As soon as grace had been said, the messenger drew the knight aside and handed him the letter.

Having perused it, the good knight was much amazed, and still more joyous, for though he had determined in his own mind no longer to seek the love or acquaintance of the writer of the letter, he still felt tempted when the letter promised him that which he most desired in the world.

He took his hostess aside, and told her that his master had sent an urgent message, and that he must leave at once—at which he pretended to feel much vexed,—and she, who had before been so joyful in the expectation of that she so much desired, became sad and sorrowful.

He quietly mounted his horse, and leaving all his comrades behind, arrived with the messenger, soon after midnight, at the castle of the lady, but her husband had just

arrived from Court and was then preparing to go to bed, and she, who had sent specially to fetch her lover, was disappointed enough, God knows.

The good knight, who had been all day in the saddle, either hunting the hare or seeking for lodgings, heard at the door that the lady's husband had arrived, and you may guess how joyful he was at the news.

He asked his guide what was to be done? They consulted together, and it was decided that he should pretend to have lost his companions, and, by good chance, met this messenger, who had brought him to the castle. This being arranged, he was brought before my lord and my lady, and acted his part as he well knew how. After having quaffed a cup of wine—which did him very little good—he was led to his bed-chamber, where he scarcely slept all night, and, early the next morning, returned with his host to Court, without having tasted any of the delights which were promised him in the letter.

And I may add that he was never able to return there again, for soon afterwards the Court left that part of the country, and he went with it, and soon forgot all about the lady—as often happens.

LXXXII

BEYOND THE MARK

By MONSEIGNEUR DE LANNOY

*Of a shepherd who made an agreement with a shepherdess that he should mount upon her "in order that he might see farther," but was not to penetrate beyond a mark which she herself made with her hand upon the instrument of the said shepherd—as will more plainly appear hereafter.*¹

Listen, if you please, to what happened near Lille to a shepherd and young shepherdess who tended their flocks together, or near each other.

Nature had already stirred in them, and they were of an age to know "the way of the world," so one day an agreement was made between them that the shepherd should mount on the shepherdess "in order to see farther,"—provided, however, that he should not penetrate beyond a mark which she made with her hand upon the natural instrument of the shepherd, and which was about two fingers' breadth below the head; and the mark was made with a blackberry taken from the hedge.

¹ In the Table of Contents of Vérard's edition, this story is ascribed to Monseigneur de Lannoy, but at the head of the story itself the name of the author is given as Jean Martin, who also wrote No. 78. Jean Martin was chief *sommelier du corps* to Philippe le Bel. After the death of that Duke, he did not remain in the service of Charles le Téméraire, but retired to Dijon, where he died, 28th Nov., 1475.

That being done, they began God's work, and the shepherd pushed in as though it had cost him no trouble, and without thinking about any mark or sign, or the promise he had made to the shepherdess, for all that he had he buried up to the hilt, and if he had had more he would have found a place to put it.

The pretty shepherdess, who had never had such a wedding, enjoyed herself so much that she would willingly have done nothing else all her life. The battle being ended, both went to look after their sheep, which had meanwhile strayed some distance. They being brought together again, the shepherd, who was called Hacquin, to pass the time, sat in a swing set up between two hedges, and there he swung, as happy as a king.

The shepherdess sat by the side of a ditch and made a wreath of flowers. She sang a little song, hoping that it would attract the shepherd, and he would begin the game over again—but that was very far from his thoughts. When she found he did not come, she began to call: "Hacquin! Hacquin!"

And he replied: "What do you want?"

"Come here! come here! will you?" she said.

But Hacquin had had a surfeit of pleasure and he replied:

"In God's name leave me alone. I am doing nothing and enjoying myself."

Then the shepherdess cried:

"Come here, Hacquin; I will let you go in farther, without making any mark."

"By St. John," said Hacquin, "I went far beyond the mark, and I do not want any more."

He would not go to the shepherdess, who was much vexed to have to remain idle.

LXXXIII

THE GLUTTONOUS MONK

By MONSEIGNEUR DE VAURIN

Of a Carmelite monk who came to preach at a village, and after his sermon he went to dine with a lady, and how he stuffed out his gown, as you will hear.

It is the custom of all countries for religious mendicants—Jacobins, Cordeliers, Carmelites, and Augustinians—to go through all the towns and villages, preaching against vice, and exalting and praising virtue.

It happened once that a Carmelite, from the convent of Arras, arrived one Sunday morning, at Libers, a pretty, little town of Artois, to preach—which he could do piously and eloquently, for he was a learned man and a good orator.

Whilst the curé was chanting high Mass, our Carmelite wandered about, hoping to find some one who wanted a Mass said, whereby the monk could earn a few pence, but no one came forward.

Seeing this, an old widow lady took compassion on him, allowed him to say a Mass, and then sent her servant to give him two “paters,” and to beg him to come to dinner with her that day.

Master monk snapped up the money, and accepted the invitation, and as soon as he had preached his sermon, and high Mass was finished, he came.

The lady for whom he had said Mass, and who had

invited him, left the church with her maid, and went home to make all ready for the preacher, who was conducted to the house by one of her servants, and most courteously received. After he had washed his hands, the lady assigned him a place by her side, and the varlet and the maid-servant prepared to serve the repast, and first they brought in leek soup, with a good piece of bacon, a dish of pig's chitterlings, and an ox tongue, roasted.

God knows that as soon as the monk saw the viands he drew forth from his girdle a fine, long, large and very sharp knife, and, as he said "Benedicite," he set to work on the leek soup.

Very soon he had finished that and the bacon as well, and drew towards him the fine, fat chitterlings, and rioted amongst them like a wolf amongst a flock of sheep; and before his hostess had half finished her soup, there was not the ghost of a chitterling left in the dish. Then he took the ox tongue, and with his sharp knife cut off so many slices that not a morsel remained.

The lady, who watched all this without saying a word, often glanced at the varlet and the servant-maid, and they smiled quietly and glanced at her. Then they brought a piece of good salt beef, and a capital piece of mutton, and put them on the table. And the good monk, who had an appetite like a hungry dog, attacked the beef, and if he had had little pity for the chitterlings and the ox tongue, still less had he for this fine piece of larded beef.

His hostess, who took great pleasure in seeing him eat, which was more than the varlet and the maid did, for they cursed him beneath their breath—always filled his cup as soon as it was empty; and you may guess

that if he did not spare the meat neither did he spare the drink.

He was in such a hurry to line his gown that he would hardly say a word. When the beef was all finished, and a great part of the mutton—of which his hostess had scarcely eaten a mouthful—she, seeing that her guest was not yet satisfied, made a sign to the servant-maid to bring a huge ham which had been cooked the day before for the household.

The maid—cursing the priest for gorging so—obeyed the order of her mistress, and put the ham on the table. The good monk, without staying to ask “who goes there,” fell upon it tooth and nail, and at the very first attack he carried off the knuckle, then the thick end, and so dismembered it that soon there was nothing left but the bone.

The serving man and woman did not laugh much at this, for he had entirely cleared the larder, and they were half afraid that he would eat them as well.

To shorten the story—after all these before mentioned dishes, the lady caused to be placed on the table a fine fat cheese, and a dish well furnished with tarts, apples, and cheeses, with a good piece of fresh butter—of all which there was not a scrap left to take away.

The dinner which has been described being thus finished, our preacher, who was now as round as a tick, pronounced grace, and then said to his hostess:

“Damsel, I thank you for your good gifts; you have given me a hearty welcome, for which I am much obliged to you. I will pray to Him who fed five thousand men with a few loaves of barley bread and two small fishes, and after they were all filled there remained over twelve basketfuls—I will pray to Him to reward you.”

"By St. John!" said the maid-servant coming forward, "you may well talk about that. I believe that if you had been one of that multitude there would not have been anything left over; for you would have eaten up everything, and me into the bargain, if I had happened to have been there."

"No, truly, my dear," replied the monk, who was a jovial fellow with a ready wit, "I should not have eaten you, but I should have spitted you, and put you down to roast—that is what I should have done to you."

The lady began to laugh, and so did the varlet and the maid-servant, in spite of themselves. And our monk, who had his belly well stuffed, again thanked his hostess for having so well filled him, and went off to another village to earn his supper—but whether that was as good as his dinner I cannot say.

LXXXIV

THE DEVIL'S SHARE

By the MARQUIS DE ROTHELIN

Of one of his marshals who married the sweetest and most lovable woman there was in all Germany. Whether what I tell you is true—for I do not swear to it, that I may not be considered a liar—you will see more plainly below.¹

Whilst we are waiting for some one to come forward and tell us a good story, I will relate a little one which will not detain you long, but is quite true, and happened lately.

I had a marshal, who had served me long and faithfully, and who determined to get a wife, and was married to the most ill-tempered woman in all the country; and when he found that neither by good means or bad could he cure her of her evil temper, he left her, and would not live with her, but avoided her as he would a tempest, for if he knew she was in any place, he would go in the contrary direction.

When she saw that he avoided her, and that he gave her no opportunity of displaying her temper, she went in search of him, and followed him, crying God knows

¹ In the Table of Contents this story is ascribed to the Marquis de Rothelin. He was Marquis de Hocheberg, Comte de Neufchâtel (Switzerland), Seigneur de Rothelin, etc., Marshal of Burgundy, and Grand Seneschal of Provence. In 1491, he was appointed Grand Chamberlain of France. He died in 1503.

what, whilst he held his tongue and pursued his road, and this only made her worse and she bestowed more curses and maledictions on her poor husband than a devil would on a damned soul.

One day she, finding that her husband did not reply a word to anything she said, followed him through the street, crying as loud as she could before all the people:

"Come here, traitor! speak to me. I belong to you. I belong to you!"

And my marshal replied each time: "I give my share to the devil! I give my share to the devil."

Thus they went all through the town of Lille, she crying all the while: "I belong to you," and the other replying: "I give my share to the devil."

Soon afterwards, so God willed, this good woman died, and my marshal was asked if he were much grieved at the loss of his wife, and he replied that never had such a piece of luck occurred to him, and if God had promised him anything he might wish, he would have wished for his wife's death; "for she," he said, "was so wicked and malicious that if I knew she were in paradise I would not go there, for there could be no peace in any place where she was. But I am sure that she is in hell, for never did any created thing more resemble a devil than she did."

Then they said to him:

"Really you ought to marry again. You should look out for some good, quiet, honest woman."

"Marry?" said he. "I would rather go and hang myself on a gibbet than again run the danger of finding such a hell as I have—thank God—now escaped from."

Thus he lived, and still lives—but I know not what he will be.

LXXXV

NAILED!

By MONSEIGNEUR DE SANTILLY

*Of a goldsmith, married to a fair, kind, and gracious lady, and very amorous withal of a priest, her neighbour, with whom her husband found her in bed, they being betrayed by one of the goldsmith's servants, who was jealous, as you will hear.*¹

A hundred years ago, or thereabouts, there happened in a town on the borders of France a curious incident, which I will relate, to increase my number of stories, and also because it deserves to rank with the others.

In this town there was a man whose wife was fair, kind, and gracious, and much enamoured of a churchman, her own curé and near neighbour, who loved her as much as she did him, but to find an opportunity to come together amorously was difficult, but it was at last found by the ingenuity of the lady, in the manner I will describe.

Her husband was a goldsmith, and so greedy of gain that he would never sleep an hour in which he could work. Every day he would rise an hour or two before

¹ The story is taken from an old fabliau (Le Forgeron de Creil), and has been used also by Sachetti, Des Periers and others. No author's name is given in Vérard, but in the MS. from which Mr. Wright worked, the name of M. de Santilly is found at the head of this tale.

dawn, and let his wife take a long rest till eight or nine o'clock, or as long as she pleased.

This amorous dame, seeing how diligent her husband was, and that he rose early every day to hammer and work, determined to employ with the curé the time during which she was neglected by her husband, and arranged that at such and such an hour her lover could visit her without her husband's knowledge, for the curé's house stood next to hers.

This happy expedient was proposed to the curé, who gladly accepted it, for it seemed to him that his amour could be carried on easily and secretly. So as soon as the proposal was made it was executed, and thus they continued to live for a long time; but fortune—envious perhaps of their happiness and sweet enjoyment—willed that their amours should be unfortunately discovered in the manner you will hear.

This goldsmith had an assistant, who was in love with his master's wife, and very jealous of her, and he perceived the curé often talking to the lady, and he guessed what was the matter. But he could not imagine how and when they met, unless it was that the curé came in the morning when he and his master were in the workshop. These suspicions so ran in his head that he watched and listened in order that he might find out the truth, and he watched so well that he learned the facts of the case, for one morning he saw the curé come, soon after the goldsmith had left the chamber, and enter and close the door after him.

When he was quite sure that his suspicions were confirmed, he informed his master of his discovery in these terms:

“Master, I serve you, not only that I may earn your

money, eat your bread, and do your work well and honestly, but also to protect your honour and preserve it from harm. If I acted otherwise I should not be worthy to be your servant. I have long had a suspicion that our curé was doing you a grievous wrong, but I said nothing to you until I was sure of the facts. That you may not suppose I am trumping up an idle story, I would beg of you to let us go now to your chamber, for I am sure that we shall find him there."

When the good man heard this news, he was much inclined to laugh, but he agreed to go to his chamber along with his assistant—who first made him promise that he would not kill the curé, or otherwise he would not accompany him, but consented that the curé should be well punished.

They went up to the chamber, and the door was soon opened. The husband entered first, and saw his wife in the arms of the curé who was forging as hard as he could.

The goldsmith cried:

"Die, die, scoundrel! What brings you here?"

The curé was surprised and alarmed, and begged for mercy.

"Silence, rascally priest, or I will kill you on the spot!"

"Oh, neighbour, have mercy, for God's sake," said the curé; "do with me whatever you like."

"By my father's soul! before I let you go, I will make you so that you will never want to hammer on any feminine anvil again. Get up, and let yourself be bound, unless you wish to die!"

The poor wretch allowed himself to be fastened by his two enemies to a bench, face upwards, and with his legs

hanging down on each side of the bench. When he was well fastened, so that he could move nothing but his head, he was carried thus trussed¹ into a little shed behind the house, which the goldsmith used as a melting-room.

When the curé was safely placed in this shed, the goldsmith sent for two long nails with large heads, and with these he fastened to the bench the two hammers which had in his absence forged on his wife's anvil, and after that undid all the ropes which fastened the poor wretch. Then taking a handful of straw, he set fire to the shed, and leaving the curé to his fate, rushed into the street, crying: "Fire!"

The priest, finding himself surrounded by flames, saw that he must either lose his genitals or be burned alive, so he jumped up and ran away, leaving his purse nailed there.

An alarm was soon raised in the street, and the neighbours ran to put out the fire. But the curé sent them back, saying that he had just come from the spot, and all the harm that could occur had already been done, so that they could give no assistance—but he did not say that it was he who had suffered all the harm.

Thus was the poor curé rewarded for his love, through the false and treacherous jealousy of the goldsmith's assistant, as you have heard.

¹ The word in the original is *marescaucié*, which presumably means—treated as the soldiers of the *maréchaussée* treated their prisoners. Bibliophile Jacob avoided philological pitfalls of this sort by omitting the phrase altogether.

LXXXVI

FOOLISH FEAR

By MONSEIGNEUR PHILIPPE VIGNIER

Of a young man of Rouen, married to a fair, young girl of the age of fifteen or thereabouts; and how the mother of the girl wished to have the marriage annulled by the judge of Rouen, and of the sentence which the said judge pronounced when he had heard the parties—as you will hear more plainly in the course of the said story.

In the good town of Rouen, not long ago, a young man was married to a fair and tender virgin, aged fifteen, or thereabouts. On the day of the great feast—that is to say, the wedding—the mother of the young girl, as is customary in such cases, instructed the bride in all the mysteries of wedlock, and taught her how to behave to her husband on the first night.

The young girl, who was looking forward to the time when she could put these doctrines into practice, took great pains and trouble to remember the lesson given her by her good mother, and it seemed to her that when the time came for her to put these counsels into execution, that she would perform her duties so well that her husband would praise her, and be well pleased with her.

The wedding was performed with all honour and due solemnity, and the desired night came; and soon after the feast was ended, and the young people had with-

drawn, after having taken leave of the newly married couple,—the mother, cousins, neighbours, and other lady friends led the bride to the chamber where she was to spend the night with her husband, where they joyfully divested her of her raiment, and put her to bed, as was right and proper. They then wished her good-night, and one said:

“My dear, may God give you joy and pleasure in your husband, and may you so live with him as to be for the salvation of both your souls.”

Another said: “My dear, God give you such peace and happiness with your husband, that the heavens may be filled with your works.”

After they all had expressed similar wishes, they left. The bride’s mother, who remained the last, questioned her daughter to see whether she remembered the lesson she had been taught. And the girl, who, as the proverb goes, did not carry her tongue in her pocket, replied that she well remembered all that had been told her, and—thank God—had forgotten nothing.

“Well done,” said the mother. “Now I will leave you, and recommend you to God, and pray that He may give you good luck. Farewell, my dear child.”

“Farewell, my good and wise mother.”

As soon as the schoolmistress had finished, the husband, who was outside the door expecting something better, came in. The mother closed the door and told him that she hoped he would be gentle with her daughter. He promised that he would, and as soon as he had bolted the door, he—who had nothing on but his doublet,—threw it off, jumped on the bed, drew as close as he could to his bride, and, lance in hand, prepared to give battle.

But when he approached the barrier where the skirmish was to take place, the girl laid hold of his lance, which was as straight and stiff as a cow-keeper's horn, and when she felt how hard and big it was, she was very frightened, and began to cry aloud, and said that her shield was not strong enough to receive and bear the blows of such a huge weapon.

Do all he would, the husband could not persuade her to joust with him, and this bickering lasted all night, without his being able to do anything, which much displeased our bridegroom. Nevertheless, he was patient, hoping to make up for lost time the next night, but it was the same as the first night, and so was the third, and so on up to the fifteenth, matters remaining just as I have told you.

When fifteen days had passed since the young couple had been married, and they had still not come together, the mother came to visit her pupil, and after a thousand questions, spoke to the girl of her husband and asked what sort of man he was, and whether he did his duty well? And the girl said that he was a nice, young man, quiet and peaceable.

"But," said the mother; "does he do what he ought to do?"

"Yes," said the girl, "but—"

"But 'what'?" said the mother. "You are keeping something back, I am sure. Tell me at once, and conceal nothing; for I must know now. Is he a man capable of performing his marital duties in the way I taught you?"

The poor girl, being thus pressed, was obliged to own that he had not yet done the business, but she did not

say that she was the cause of the delay, and that she had always refused the combat.

When her mother heard this sad news, God knows what a disturbance she made, swearing by all her gods that she would soon find a remedy for that, for she was well acquainted with the judge of Rouen, who was her friend, and would favour her cause.

"The marriage must be annulled," she said, "and I have no doubt that I shall be able to find out the way, and you may be sure, my child, that before two days are over you will be divorced and married to another man who will not let you rest in peace all that time. You leave the matter to me."

The good woman, half beside herself, went and related her wrong to her husband, the father of the girl, and told him that they had lost their daughter, and adducing many reasons why the marriage should be annulled.

She pleaded her cause so well that her husband took her side, and was content that the bridegroom, (who knew no reason why a complaint should be lodged against him), should be cited before the Judge. But, at any rate, he was personally summoned to appear before the Judge, at his wife's demand, to show cause why he should not leave her, and permit her to marry again, or explain the reasons why, in so many days that he had lived with her, he had not demonstrated that he was a man and performed the duties that a husband should.

When the day came, the parties presented themselves at the proper time and place, and they were called upon to state their case. The mother of the bride began to plead her daughter's cause, and God knows the laws concerning marriage which she quoted, none of which,

she maintained, had her son-in-law fulfilled; therefore she demanded that he should be divorced from her daughter at once without any more ado.

The young man was much astonished to find himself thus attacked, but lost no time in replying to the allegations of his adversary, and quietly stated his case, and related how his wife had always refused to allow him to perform his marital duties.

The mother, when she heard this reply, was more angry than ever, and would hardly believe it, and asked her daughter if that was true which her husband had said?

"Yes, truly, mother," she replied.

"Oh, wretched girl," said her mother, "why did you refuse? Did I not teach you your lesson many times?"

The poor girl could not reply, so ashamed was she.

"At any rate," said her mother, "I must know the reason why you have refused. Tell it me at once, or I shall be horribly angry."

The girl was obliged to confess that she had found the lance of the champion so big that she had not dared to present her shield, fearing that he would kill her; and so she still felt, and was not reassured upon that point, although her mother had told her not to be afraid. After this the mother addressed the Judge, and said:

"Monseigneur, you have heard the confession of my daughter, and the defence of my son-in-law. I beg of you to give judgment at once."

The judge ordered a bed to be prepared in his house, and the couple to lie on it together, and commanded the bride to boldly lay hold of the stick or instrument, and put it where it was ordered to go. When this judgment was given, the mother said:

"Thank you, my lord; you have well judged. Come along, my child, do what you should, and take care not to disobey the judge, and put the lance where it ought to be put."

"I am satisfied," said the daughter, "to put it where it ought to go, but it may rot there before I will take it out again."

So they left the Court, and went and carried out the sentence themselves, without the aid of any sergeants. By this means the young man enjoyed his joust, and was sooner sick of it than she who would not begin.

LXXXVII

WHAT THE EYE DOES NOT SEE

By MONSIEUR LE VOYER

Of a gentle knight who was enamoured of a young and beautiful girl, and how he caught a malady in one of his eyes, and therefore sent for a doctor, who likewise fell in love with the same girl, as you will hear; and of the words which passed between the knight and the doctor concerning the plaster which the doctor had put on the knight's good eye.

In the pleasant and fertile land of Holland, not a hundred years ago, a noble knight lodged in a fair and good inn, where there was a young and very pretty chambermaid, with whom he was greatly enamoured, and for love of her had arranged with the Duke of Burgundy's quartermaster that he should be lodged in this inn, in order that he might better carry out his intentions with regard to this girl.

After he had been at this inn five or six days, there happened to him a misfortune, for he had a disease in one of his eyes so that he could not keep it open, so sharp was the pain. And as he much feared to lose it, and it was an organ that required much care and attention, he sent for the Duke's surgeon, who was at that time in the town. And you must know that the said surgeon was a good fellow, and much esteemed and spoken about throughout all the country.

As soon as the surgeon saw this eye, he declared that

it could not be saved, which is what they customarily say, so that if they do cure the disease they may gain more praise and profit.

The good knight was greatly vexed at this news, and asked if there were no means of cure, and the other replied that it would be very difficult, nevertheless he might, with God's aid, cure it, if the knight would obey all his instructions.

"If you can cure me and save my eye," said the knight, "I will pay you well."

The bargain was made, and the surgeon undertook with God's aid to cure the bad eye, and arranged at what hour he would come every day to apply the dressings.

You must know that every time the surgeon came to see his patient, the pretty chambermaid accompanied him, to hold his box or basin, or help to move the poor patient, who forgot half his pain in the presence of his lady-love.

If the good knight had been struck by the beauty of the chambermaid, so also was the surgeon; who, each time that he paid a visit, could not help casting sheep's eyes at the fair face of the chambermaid, and at last passionately declared his love, which was well received, for she immediately granted his requests, but it was not easy to find means to carry out their ardent desires.

At last, after some trouble, a plan was hit on by the prudent and cunning surgeon, and it was this:

"I will tell my patient," he said, "that his eye cannot be cured unless his other eye is bandaged, for by throwing all the work on the sound eye he prevents the other from getting well. If he will allow it to be bandaged up, we shall have a capital means of taking our pleasure,

even in his chamber, without his having any suspicion of it."

The girl, whose desires were quite as warm as those of the surgeon, was quite agreeable, provided the plan could be carried out.

"We will try," said the surgeon.

He came at the usual hour to see the bad eye, and when he had uncovered it, pretended to be much surprised.

"What!" he cried. "I never saw such a disease; the eye is worse than it was fifteen days ago. You must have patience, monsieur."

"In what way?" said the knight.

"Your good eye must be bandaged and concealed, so that no light can reach it, for an hour or so after I have applied this plaster and ordered another—for, no doubt, it prevents the other from healing. Ask," he said, "this pretty girl, who sees it every day, how it is getting on."

The girl said that it looked worse than before.

"Well," said the knight, "I leave myself in your hands; do with me whatever you please. I am content to be blindfolded as much as you like, provided I am cured in the long run."

The two lovers were very joyful when they saw that the knight allowed his eyes to be bandaged. When all the arrangements had been made, and the knight had his eyes bandaged, master surgeon pretended to leave as usual, promising to come back soon to take off the bandage.

He did not go very far, for he threw the girl on a couch not far from the patient, and with quite a different instrument to that which he had employed on the knight, visited the secret cloisters of the chambermaid.



Three, four, five, six times did he perform on the pretty girl without the knight noticing it, for though he heard the storm, he did not know what it was; but as it still continued, his suspicions were aroused, and this time, when he heard the noise of the combat, he tore off the bandages and plasters and threw them away, and saw the two lovers struggling together, and seeming as though they would eat each other, so closely united were their mouths.

“What is this, master surgeon?” cried he. “Have you blindfolded me in order to do me this wrong? Is my eye to be cured by this means? Tell me—did you prepare this trick for me? By St. John, I suspect I was more often visited for love of my chambermaid than for my eyes. Well! well! I am in your hands now, sir, and cannot yet revenge myself, but the day will come when I will make you remember me.”

The surgeon, who was a thoroughly good fellow, began to laugh, and made his peace with the knight, and I believe that, after the eye was cured she agreed to divide the work between them.

LXXXVIII

A HUSBAND IN HIDING

By ALARDIN

*Of a poor, simple peasant married to a nice pleasant woman, who did much as she liked, and who in order that she might be alone with her lover, shut up her husband in the pigeon-house in the manner you will hear.*¹

In a pretty, little town near here, but which I will not name, there recently occurred an incident which will furnish a short story.

There lived there a good, simple, unlettered peasant, married to a nice, pleasant woman, and as long as he had plenty to eat and drink he cared for little else. He was accustomed to often go into the country to a house he had there, and stay, three or four days, sometimes more, sometimes less, as suited his pleasure, and left his wife to enjoy herself in the town, which she did, for, in order that she might not be frightened, she had always a man to take her husband's place, and look after the workshop and see that the tools did not rust.

Her method was to wait until her husband was out

¹ Found also in Boccaccio (Dec. day VIII, nov. VII). Poggio (Fraus mulieris), and in several of the collections of fabliaux (La Bourgeoise d'Orléans).

Mr. Wright gives Alardin (who also contributed No. 77) as the author. An Alardin Bournel returned to France with Louis XI in 1461.

of sight, and not until she was quite sure that he would not return did she send for his deputy, in order that she might not be surprised.

But she could not always manage so well as not to be surprised, for once when her husband had remained away two or three days, and on the fourth day, she had waited as long as possible until the gates of the town were closed; thinking he would not come that day, she closed the doors and the windows as on the other days, brought her lover into the house, and they began to drink and enjoy themselves.

They were scarcely seated at the table, when her husband came and thundered at the door, which he was much surprised to find closed.

When the good woman heard it, she hid her lover under the bed; then went to the door and demanded who knocked?

"Open the door," replied her husband.

"Ah, husband, is that you?" she said. "I was going to send a message to you to-morrow morning to tell you not to come back."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked her husband.

"What is the matter? God in heaven!" she replied. "The sergeants were here two hours and a half, waiting to take you to prison."

"To prison!" said he. "Why to prison? Have I done anything wrong? To whom do I owe any money? Who brings any charge against me?"

"I know nothing about it," said the cunning wench, "but they evidently wanted to do you harm."

"But did they not tell you," asked her husband, "why they wanted me?"

"No," she replied; "nothing, except that if they laid

hands on you, you would not get out of prison for a long time."

"Thank God they haven't caught me yet. Good-bye, I am going back."

"Where are you going?" she asked—though she was glad to get rid of him.

"Whence I came," he replied.

"I will come with you," she said.

"No, don't. Stay and take care of the house, and do not tell anyone that I have been here."

"Since you will return to the country," she said, "make haste and get away before they close the gates: it is already late."

"If they should be shut, the gate-keeper will do anything for me and he will open them again."

With these words he left, and when he came to the gate, he found it closed, and, beg and pray as he might, the gate-keeper would not open it for him.

He was very annoyed that he should have to return to his house, for he feared the sergeants; nevertheless, he was obliged to go back, or sleep in the streets.

He went back, and knocked at the door, and the woman who had again sat down with her lover, was much surprised, but she jumped up, and ran to the door, and called out:

"My husband has not come back; you are wasting your time."

"Open the door, my dear," said the good man. "I am here."

"Alas! alas! the gate was closed: I feared as much," she said. "You will certainly be arrested; I see no hope for escape, for the sergeants told me, I now remember, that they would return to-night."

"Oh, well," he said, "there is no need of a long sermon. Let us consider what is to be done."

"You must hide somewhere in the house," she said, "and I do not know of any place where you would be safe."

"Should I be safe," he asked, "in our pigeon-house? Who would look for me there?"

She was, of course, highly delighted at the suggestion, but pretended not to be, and said:

"It is not a very nice place; it stinks too much."

"I don't mind that," he said. "I would rather be there an hour or two, and be safe, than be in a better place and be caught."

"Oh, well, if you are brave enough to go there, I am of your opinion that it would be a good hiding-place."

The poor man ascended into the pigeon-house, which fastened outside, and was locked in, and told his wife that if the sergeants did not come soon, that she was to let him out.

She left him to coo with the pigeons all night, which he did not much like, and he was afraid to speak or call, for fear of the sergeants.

At daybreak, which was the time when her lover left the house, the good woman came and called her husband and opened the door; and he asked her why she had left him so long alone with the pigeons. And she, having prepared her reply, said that the sergeants had watched round their house all night, and spoken to her several times, and had only just gone, but they said that they would come back at a time when they were likely to find him.

The poor fellow, much wondering what the sergeants could want with him, left at once, and returned to the

country, vowing that he would not come back for a long time. God knows how pleased the wench was at this, though she pretended to be grieved. And by this means she enjoyed herself more than ever, for she had no longer any dread of her husband's return.

LXXXIX

THE FAULT OF THE ALMANAC

By PONCELET

Of a curé who forgot, either by negligence or ignorance to inform his parishioners that Lent had come until Palm Sunday arrived, as you will hear—and of the manner in which he excused himself to his parishioners.

In a certain little hamlet or village in this country, far from any good town, there happened an incident, which is worth hearing, my good sirs.

This village or hamlet was inhabited by a handful of rough and simple peasants, who knew nothing except how to gain their livelihood. Rough and ignorant as they were, their curé was not less so, for he did not know things of common knowledge, as I will show you by relating an incident that happened to him.

You must know that this curé was so simple and ignorant that he could not announce the feasts of the saints, which come every year on a fixed day, as every one knows; and when his parishioners asked when such and such a feast would fall, he could not, right off, answer them correctly.

Amongst other such mistakes, which often occurred, he made one which was by no means slight, for he allowed the five weeks of Lent to slip by without informing his parishioners.

But hear how he discovered his error. On the Saturday which was the eve before Palm Sunday, he had need to go to the nearest town for something that he required. When he had entered the town, and was riding along the streets, he saw that the priests were purchasing palms and other greenstuff, which were being sold at the market for the procession the next day.

If anyone was astonished it was our good curé, though he pretended not to be. He went to the woman who sold the palms and boughs, and bought some—pretending that he had come to town specially for that purpose. Then he hastily mounted his horse, which was loaded with his purchases, galloped to the village, and arrived there as quickly as possible.

As soon as he had dismounted, he met several of his parishioners, whom he commanded to go and ring the bells for every one to come to church at once, for he had certain things necessary for the salvation of their souls to tell them.

A meeting was soon called, and all were assembled in the church, where the curé, booted and spurred, came, much flustered, God knows. He mounted into the pulpit, and said the following words:

“Good sirs, I have to signify and inform you that to-day was the eve of the solemn feast of Palm Sunday, and this day next week will be the eve of Easter Sunday, the day of Our Lord’s Resurrection.”

When these good people heard this news they began to murmur, and were so astonished they did not know what to do.

“Silence!” said the curé. “I will soon satisfy you, and will tell you the true reasons why you have only eight days of Lent in which to perform your penitences this

year, and marvel not at what I am about to tell you, as to why Lent came so late. I suppose there is not one amongst you who does not know and remember that the frosts were very long and sharp this year—much worse than ever they were—and that for many weeks it was dangerous to ride, on account of the frost and the snow, which lasted a long time.

“Every one here knows that is as true as the Gospel, therefore be not astonished that Lent has been so long coming, but rather wonder that it was able to come at all, seeing how long the road is from here to his house. I would ask, and even beg of you, to excuse him, for I dined with him to-day.” (And he named the place—that is to say, the town to which he had been.)

“However,” he added, “manage to come and confess this week, and appear to-morrow in the procession, as is customary. And have patience this time; the coming year will be milder, please God, and then Lent will come quicker, as it usually does.”

Thus did the curé find means to excuse his simple ignorance. Then he pronounced the benediction, saying:

“Pray to God for me, and I will pray to God for you.”

After that he came down out of the pulpit, and went to his house to prepare the boughs and palms which were to be used in the procession the next day.

And that is all.

XC

A GOOD REMEDY

By MONSEIGNEUR DE BEAUMONT

Of a good merchant of Brabant whose wife was very ill, and he, supposing that she was about to die, after many remonstrances and exhortations for the salvation of her soul, asked her pardon, and she pardoned him all his misdeeds, excepting that he had not worked her as much as he ought to have done—as will appear more plainly in the said story.¹

To increase the number of stories that I promised to tell, I will relate a circumstance that occurred lately.

In the fair land of Brabant—the place in the world where adventures most often happen—there lived a good and honest merchant, whose wife was very ill, and had to keep her bed continually because of her disease.

The good man, seeing his wife so ill and weak, led a sad life; he was so vexed and distressed and he much feared she would die. In this state of grief, and believing that he was about to lose her, he came to her bedside, and gave her hopes of being cured and comforted her as best he could. And after that he had talked with her a little time and ended his admonitions and exhortations,

¹ Nos. 90, 91, 93, and 95, are all taken from the *Facetiæ* of Poggio. No. 93 is, according to Mr. Wright, by Timoléon Vignier, possibly a brother of Philippe Vigner.

he begged her pardon, and requested that if he had ever wronged her in any way that she would pardon him.

Amongst other instances of things which he knew had annoyed her, he mentioned that he had not polished up her armour (that part which is called the "cuirass") as often as she would have liked, and therefore he humbly begged her pardon.

The poor invalid, as soon as she could speak, pardoned him all his minor offences, but this last she would not willingly pardon without knowing the reasons which had induced her husband to neglect polishing up her armour when he knew well what a pleasure it was to her, and that she asked for nothing better.

"What?" he said. "Will you die without pardoning those who have done you wrong?"

"I do not mind pardoning you," she said, "but I want to know your reasons—otherwise I will not pardon you."

The good husband thought he had hit on a good excuse, and one that would obtain his pardon, and replied:

"My dear, you know that very often you were ill and weak—although not so ill as I see you now—and I did not dare to challenge you to combat whilst you were in that condition, fearing that it might make you worse. But be sure that if I refrained from embracing you, it was only out of love and affection to you."

"Hold your tongue, liar that you are! I was never so ill and weak that I should have refused the battle. You must seek some other reason if you would obtain your pardon, for that one will not help you; and since there is now nothing to be done, I will tell you, wicked and cowardly man that you are! that there is no medicine in the world which will so quickly drive away the maladies

of us women as the pleasant and amorous society of men. Do you see me now weakened and dried up with disease? Well! all that I want is your company."

"Ho, Ho!" said the other; "then I will quickly cure you."

He jumped on the bed and performed as well as he could, and, as soon as he had broken two lances, she rose and stood on her feet.

Half an hour later she was out in the street, and her neighbours, who all looked upon her as almost dead, were much astonished, until she told them by what means she had been cured, when they at once replied that that was the only remedy.

Thus did the good merchant learn how to cure his wife; but it turned out to his disadvantage in the long run, for she often pretended to be sick in order to get her physic.

XCI

THE OBEDIENT WIFE

By the EDITOR

Of a man who was married to a woman so lascivious and lickerish, that I believe she must have been born in a stove, or half a league from the summer sun, for no man, however well he might work, could satisfy her; and how her husband thought to punish her, and the answer she gave him.

When I was lately in Flanders, in one of the largest towns in the province, a jovial fellow told me a good story of a man married to a woman so given to venery and concupiscence that she would have let a man lie with her in the public streets.

Her husband knew well how she misbehaved herself, but he was not clever enough to prevent it, so cunning and depraved was she. He threatened to beat, to leave her, or to kill her, but it was all a waste of words; he might as well have tried to tame a mad dog or some other animal. She was always seeking fresh lovers with whom to fornicate, and there were few men in all the country round who had not tried to satisfy her lust; anyone who winked at her, even if he were humpbacked, old, deformed, or disfigured in any way, could have her favours for nothing.

Her unfortunate husband, seeing that she still continued this life in spite of all his menaces, tried to hit

upon a method to frighten her. When he was alone with her in the house, he said:

"Well, Jehanne, (or Beatrix, for so he called her), I see that you are determined to continue this life of vice, and, however much I may threaten to punish you, you take no more heed of me than though I held my tongue."

"Alas, husband," she replied, "I am much to be pitied, but there is no help for it, for I was born under a planet which compels me to go with men."

"Oh, indeed," said the husband, "is that your destiny? I swear I will soon find a remedy for that."

"You will kill me then," she said, "for nothing else will cure me."

"Never mind," he said. "I know the best way."

"What is it?" she asked. "Tell me."

"Morbleu!" said he. "I will give you such a doing some day, that I will put a quartette of babies in your belly, and then I will leave you to get your own living."

"You will?" she cried. "Indeed! Well, you have but to begin. Such threats frighten me very little, I do not care a farthing for them! May I have my head shaved if I attempt to run away.¹ If you think you are capable of making four babies at once, come on and begin at once—the mold is ready."

"The devil take the woman," said the husband; "there is no way of punishing her."

He was obliged to let her fulfil her destiny, for nothing short of splitting her head open would have kept her backside quiet; so he let her run about like a bitch in heat amongst a couple of dozen dogs, and accomplish all her inordinate desires.

¹ Long hair was considered honourable, and to have the head shaved or cropped was a mark of disgrace.

XCII

WOMEN'S QUARRELS

By the EDITOR

Of a married woman who was in love with a Canon, and, to avoid suspicion, took with her one of her neighbours when she went to visit the Canon; and of the quarrel that arose between the two women, as you will hear.

In the noble city of Metz in Lorraine, there lived, some time ago a woman who was married but also belonged to the confraternity of the "houlette";¹ nothing pleased her more than that nice amusement we all know: she was always ready to employ her arms, and prove that she was right valiant, and cared little for blows.

Now hear what happened to her whilst she was exercising her profession. She was enamoured of a fat canon, who had more money than an old dog has fleas. But as he lived in a place where people came at all hours, she did not know how she was to come to her canon unperceived.

She pondered over the matter, and at last determined to take into her confidence a neighbour of hers, a sister-in-arms also of the "houlette," for it seemed to her that she might go and see her canon, if accompanied by her neighbour, without causing any suspicion.

¹ "The frail sisterhood."

As it was devised, so was it done, and she went to see the canon, as though on an affair of great importance, and honourably escorted, as has been said.

To shorten the story, as soon as our "bourgeoises" arrived, after all due salutations, the principal personage shut herself up with her lover, the canon, and he gave her a mount, as he well knew how.

The neighbour, seeing the other have a private audience with the master of the house, had no small envy, and was much displeased that she could not do the same.

When the first-named woman came out of the room, after receiving what she came for, she said to her neighbour:

"Shall we go?"

"Oh, indeed," said the other, "am I to go away like that? If I do not receive the same courtesy that you did, by God! I will reveal everything. I did not come to warm the wax for other people."

When they saw what she wanted, they offered her the canon's clerk, who was a stout and strong gallant, well suited for the work, but she refused him point-blank, saying that she deserved his master and would have none other.

The canon was obliged, to save his honour, to grant her request, and when that was accomplished, she wished to say farewell and leave.

But then the other would not, for she said angrily that it was she who had brought her neighbour, and for whom the meeting was primarily intended, and she ought to have a bigger share than the other, and that she would not leave unless she had another "truss of oats."

The canon was much alarmed when he heard this, and,

although he begged the woman who wanted the extra turn not to insist, she would not be satisfied.

"Well," he said, "I am content, since it needs must be; but never come back under similar conditions—I shall be out of town."

When the battle was over, the damsel who had had an additional turn, when she took leave, asked the canon to give her something as a keepsake.

Without waiting to be too much importuned, and also to get rid of them, the good canon handed them the remainder of a piece of stuff for kerchiefs, which he gave them, and the "principal" received the gift, and they said farewell.

"It is," he said, "all that I can give you just now; so take it in good part."

They had not gone very far, and were in the street, when the neighbour, who had had nothing more than one turn, told her companion that she wanted her share of the gift.

"Very well," said the other, "I have no objection. How much do you want?"

"Need you ask that," said she. "I am going to have half, and you the same."

"How dare you ask," said the other, "more than you have earned? Have you no shame? You know well that you only went once with the canon, and I went twice, and, pardieu, it is not right that you should have as much as I."

"Pardieu! I will have as much as you," said the second.

"Did I not do my duty as well as you?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Is not once as good as ten times? And now that you

know my will, instead of standing here squabbling over a trifle, I recommend you to give me my half, or you will soon see a fight. Do you think you can do as you like with me?"

"Oh, indeed!" said the other, "will you try force? By God's power you shall only have what is right,—that is to say one third part—and I will have the rest. Did I not have twice as much trouble as you?"

With that the other doubled up her fist and landed it in the face of her companion, the one for whom the meeting had been first arranged, who quickly returned the blow. In short they fought as though they would have killed each other, and called one another foul names. When the people in the street saw the fight between the two companions, who a short while previously had been so friendly, they were much astonished, and came and separated the combatants. Then the husbands were called, and each asked his wife the cause of the quarrel. Each tried to make the other in the wrong, without telling the real cause, and set their husbands against each other so that they fought, and the sergeants came and sent them to cool their heels in prison.

Justice intervened, and the two women were compelled to own that the fight was about a piece of stuff for a kerchief. The Council, seeing that the case did not concern them, sent it to the "King of the Bordels," because the women were his subjects. And during the affair the poor husbands remained in gaol awaiting sentence, which, owing to the infinite number of cases, is likely to remain unsettled for a long time.

XCIII

HOW A GOOD WIFE WENT ON A PILGRIMAGE

By MESSIRE TIMOLEON VIGNIER

Of a good wife who pretended to her husband that she was going on a pilgrimage, in order to find opportunity to be with her lover, the parish-clerk—with whom her husband found her; and of what he said and did when he saw them doing you know what.

Whilst I have a good audience, let me relate a funny incident which happened in the district of Hainault.

In a village there, lived a married woman, who loved the parish clerk much more than she did her own husband, and in order to find means to be with the clerk, she feigned to her husband that she owed a pilgrimage to a certain saint, whose shrine was not far from there; which pilgrimage she had vowed to make when she was in travail with her last child, begging the saint that he would be content that she should go on a certain day she named.

The good, simple husband, who suspected nothing, allowed her to go on this pilgrimage; and as he would have to remain alone, he told her to prepare both his dinner and supper before she left, or else he would go and eat at the tavern.

She did as he ordered, and prepared a nice chicken and a piece of mutton, and when all these preparations were

complete, she told her husband that everything was now ready, and that she was going to get some holy water, and then leave.

She went to church, and the first man she met was the one she sought, that is to say the clerk, to whom she told the news, that is to say how she had been permitted to go on a pilgrimage for the whole day.

"And this is what will occur," she said. "I am sure that as soon as I am out of the house that he will go to the tavern, and not return until late in the evening, for I know him of old; and so I should prefer to remain in the house, whilst he is away, rather than go somewhere else. Therefore you had better come to our house in half an hour, and I will let you in by the back door, if my husband is not at home, and if he should be, we will set out on our pilgrimage."

She went home, and there she found her husband, at which she was not best pleased.

"What! are you still here?" he asked.

"I am going to put on my shoes," she said, "and then I shall not be long before I start."

She went to the shoemaker, and whilst she was having her shoes put on, her husband passed in front of the cobbler's house, with another man, a neighbour, with whom he often went to the tavern.

She supposed that because he was accompanied by this neighbour that they were going to the tavern; whereas he had no intention of the kind, but was going to the market to find a comrade or two and bring them back to dine with him, since he had a good dinner to offer them—that is to say the chicken and the mutton.

Let us leave the husband to find his comrades, and



return to the woman who was having her shoes put on. As soon as that was completed, she returned home as quickly as she could, where she found the scholar wandering round the house, and said to him:

"My dear, we are the happiest people in the world, for I have seen my husband go to the tavern, I am sure, for one of his neighbours was leading him by the arm, and I know is not likely to let my man come back, and therefore let us be joyful. We have the whole day, till night, to ourselves. I have prepared a chicken, and a good piece of mutton, and we will enjoy ourselves;" and without another word they entered the house, but left the door ajar in order that the neighbours should suspect nothing.

Let us now return to the husband, who had found a couple of boon companions besides the one I have mentioned, and now brought them to his house to devour the chicken, and drink some good Beaune wine—or better, if they could get it.

When he came to the house, he entered first, and immediately saw our two lovers, who were taking a sample of the good work they had to do. And when he saw his wife with her legs in the air, he told her that she need not have troubled to bother the cobbler about her shoes, since she was going to make the pilgrimage in that way.

He called his companions, and said:

"Good sirs, just see how my wife looks after my interests. For fear that she should wear out her new shoes, she is making the journey on her back;—no other woman would have done that."

He picked up the remainder of the fowl, and told her that she might finish her pilgrimage; then closed the

door and left her with her clerk, without saying another word, and went off to the tavern. He was not scolded when he came back, nor on the other occasions either that he went there, because he had said little or nothing concerning the pilgrimage which his wife had made at home with her lover, the parish clerk.

XCIV

DIFFICULT TO PLEASE

*Of a curé who wore a short gown, like a gallant about to be married, for which cause he was summoned before the Ordinary, and of the sentence which was passed, and the defence he made, and the other tricks he played afterwards—as you will plainly hear.*¹

In Picardy, in the diocese of Therouenne, there lived about a year and a half ago, in one of the large towns, a curé who aped the fashionable youth of the time. He wore a short gown, and high boots, as was the fashion at Court, and, in short, was as great a gallant as you would see,—which gave no small offence to all good Churchmen.

The Ordinary of Therouenne—who is generally known as the “big devil”—was informed of the behaviour of this curé, and cited him to appear to be punished, and ordered to change his method of dressing.

He appeared in his short gown, as though he cared little for the Ordinary, or thinking, perhaps, that he was going to be let off for his good looks, but this did not happen, for when he was before the judge, the “promoter” related the case at full length, and demanded that these clothes and other vanities should be forbidden him, and that he should be condemned to pay certain fines.

¹ There is no author's name to this story in any of the editions.

The judge, seeing at a glance what sort of man our curé was, forbade him, by all the penalties of canon law, to disguise himself in the way he had done, and ordered that he was to wear long gowns and long hair, and moreover, to pay a good sum of money.

The curé promised that he would do so, and never again be summoned for a similar offence. He left the Court and returned to his cure, and as soon as he came there, he called the draper and the tailor, and he had a gown made which trailed three-quarters of an ell on the ground; for he told the tailor how he had been reproofed for wearing a short gown and ordered to wear a long one.

He put on this long robe, and allowed his beard and hair to grow, and in this habit performed his parochial duties, sang Mass and did everything that a priest has to do.

The promoter was soon informed that the curé behaved in a way not compatible with good morals, whereupon a fresh summons was issued, and the priest appeared in his long gown.

"What is this?" asked the judge when the curé appeared before him. "It seems that you make fun of the statutes and ordinances of the Church! Why do you not dress like the other priests? If it were not for some of your friends I should send you to prison."

"What, monseigneur!" said the curé. "Did you not order me to wear a long gown, and long hair? Have I not done as I was commanded? Is not my gown long enough? Is not my hair long? What do you wish me to do?"

"I wish," said the judge, "and I command that your gown and hair should be half long, neither too much

nor too little, and for this great fault that you have committed, I condemn you to pay a fine of ten pounds to the Prosecutor, twenty pounds to the Chapter, and as much to the Bishop of Therouenne for his charities."

Our curé was much astonished, but there was nothing for it but to comply. He took leave of the judge, and returned to his house, considering how he should attire himself in order to obey the judge's sentence. He sent for the tailor, whom he ordered to make a gown as long on one side as that we have mentioned, and, as short as the first one on the other side, then he had himself shaved on one side only—that on which the gown was short—and in this guise went about the streets, and performed his sacred duties; and although he was told this was not right of him, he paid no attention.

The Prosecutor was again informed, and cited him to appear a third time. When he appeared, God knows how angry the judge was—he was almost beside himself, and could scarcely sit on the Bench when he saw the curé dressed like a mummer. If the priest had been mulcted before he was still more so this time, and was condemned to pay very heavy fines.

Then the curé, finding himself thus immersed in fines and amends, said to the judge:

"With all due respect, it seems to me that I have obeyed your orders. Hear what I have to say, and I will prove it."

Then he covered his long beard with his hand, and said:

"If you like, I have no beard." Then, covering the shaved side of his face, he said, "If you like, I have a long beard. Is not that what you ordered?"

The judge, seeing that he had to do with a joker, who

was making fun of him, sent for a barber and a tailor, and before all the public, had the curé's hair and beard dressed, and his gown cut to a proper and reasonable length; then he sent him back to his cure where he conducted himself properly—having learned the right manner at the expense of his purse.

XCV

THE SORE FINGER CURED

By PHILIPPE DE LAON

Of a monk who feigned to be very ill and in danger of death, that he might obtain the favours of a certain young woman in the manner which is described hereafter.

It is usually the case, thank God, that in many religious communities there are certain good fellows who can play "base instruments."

Apropos of this, there was formerly in a convent at Paris a good brother, a preacher, who was accustomed to visit his female neighbours. One day his choice lighted on a very pretty woman, a near neighbour, young, buxom, and spirited, and but recently married to a good fellow.

Master monk fell in love with her, and was always thinking and devising ways and means by which he could compass his desires—which were, in short, to do you know what. Now he decided: "That is what I'll do." Then he changed his mind. So many plans came into his head that he could not decide on any; but of one thing he was sure, and that was that words alone would never seduce her from the paths of virtue. "For she is too virtuous, and too prudent. I shall be obliged, if I want to gain my ends, to gain them by cunning and deception."

Now listen to the plan the rascal devised, and how he

dishonestly trapped the poor, little beast, and accomplished his immoral desires, as he proposed.

He pretended one day to have a bad finger—that which is nearest to the thumb, and is the first of the four on the right hand—and he wrapped it in linen bandages and anointed it with strong-smelling ointments.

He went about with it thus for a day or two, hanging about the church porch, when he thought the aforesaid woman was coming, and God knows what pain he pretended to suffer.

The silly wench looked on him with pity, and seeing by his face that he appeared to be in great pain, she asked him what was the matter; and the cunning fox pitched up a piteous tale.

The day passed, and on the morrow, about the hour of vespers, when the good woman was at home alone, the patient came and sat by her and acted the sick man, that anyone who had seen him would have believed that he was in great danger. Sometimes he would walk to the window, then back again to the woman, and put on so many strange tricks that you would have been astonished and deceived if you had seen him. And the poor foolish girl, who pitied him so that the tears almost started from her eyes, comforted him as best she could.

“Alas, Brother Aubrey, have you spoken to such and such physicians?”

“Yes, certainly, my dear,” he replied. “There is not a doctor or surgeon in Paris who has not studied my case.”

“And what do they say? Will you have to suffer this pain for a long time?”

“Alas! yes; until I die, unless God helps me; for there is but one remedy for my complaint, and I would rather

die than reveal what that is,—for it is very far from decent, and quite foreign to my holy profession.”

“What?” cried the poor girl. “Then there is a remedy! Then is it not very wrong and sinful of you to allow yourself to suffer thus? Truly it seems so to me, for you are in danger of losing sense and understanding, so sharp and terrible is the pain.”

“By God, very sharp and terrible it is,” said Brother Aubrey, “but there!—God sent it; praised be His name. I willingly suffer and bear all, and patiently await death, for that is the only remedy indeed—excepting one I mentioned to you—which can cure me.”

“But what is that?”

“I told you that I should not dare to say what it is,—and even if I were obliged to reveal what it is, I should never have the will or power to put it in execution.”

“By St. Martin!” said the good woman, “it appears to me that you are very wrong to talk like that. Pardieu! tell me what will cure you, and I assure you that I will do my utmost to help you. Do not wilfully throw away your life when help and succour can be brought. Tell me what it is, and you will see that I will help you—I will, pardieu, though it should cost me more than you imagine.”

The monk, finding his neighbour was willing to oblige him, after a great number of refusals and excuses, which, for the sake of brevity, I omit, said in a low voice:

“Since you desire that I should tell you, I will obey. The doctors all agreed that there was but one remedy for my complaint, and that was to put my finger into the secret place of a clean and honest woman, and keep it there for a certain length of time, and afterwards apply a certain ointment of which they gave me the receipt.

You hear what the remedy is, and as I am by disposition naturally modest, I would rather endure and suffer all my ills than breathe a word to a living soul. You alone know of my sad lot, and that in spite of me."

"Well!" said the good woman, "what I said I would do I will do. I will willingly help to cure you, and am well pleased to be able to relieve you of the terrible pain which torments you, and find you a place in which you can put your sore finger."

"May God repay you, damsel!" said the monk. "I should never have dared to make the request, but since you are kind enough to help me, I shall not be the cause of my own death. Let us go then, if it please you, to some secret place where no one can see us."

"It pleases me well," she replied.

So she led him to a fair chamber, and closed the door, and laid upon the bed, and the monk lifted up her clothes, and instead of the finger of his hand, put something hard and stiff in the place. When he had entered, she feeling that it was very big, said:

"How is it that your finger is so swollen? I never heard of anything like it."

"Truly," he replied, "it is the disease which made it like that."

"It is wonderful," she said.

Whilst this talk was going on, master monk accomplished that for which he had played the invalid so long. When she felt—et cetera—She asked what that was, and he replied:

"It is the boil on my finger which has burst. I am cured I think—thank God and you."

"On my word I am pleased to hear it," said the woman

as she rose from the bed. "If you are not quite cured, come back as often as you like;—for to remove your pain there is nothing I would not do. And another time do not be so modest when it is a question of recovering your health."

XCVI

A GOOD DOG

*Of a foolish and rich village priest who buried his dog in the churchyard; for which cause he was summoned before his Bishop, and how he gave 50 gold crowns to the Bishop, and what the Bishop said to him—which you will find related here.*¹

Listen if you please to what happened the other day to a simple village curé.

This good curé had a dog which he had brought up, and which surpassed every other dog in the country in fetching a stick out of the water, or bringing a hat that his master had forgotten, and many other tricks. In short, this wise and good dog excelled in everything, and his master so loved him that he never tired of singing his praises.

At last, I know not how, whether he ate something that disagreed with him, or whether he was too hot or too cold, the poor dog became very ill, and died, and went straightway to wherever all good dogs do go.

What did the honest curé do? You must know that his vicarage adjoined the churchyard, and when he saw his poor dog quit this world, he thought so wise a beast ought not to be without a grave, so he dug a hole near the door of his house, and in the churchyard, and there

¹ An exceedingly old story, found in a fabliau by Rutebeuf, Poggio's *Facetiæ* (*Canis testamentum*), etc. It also occurs in a collection of Russian folk-lore tales.

buried his dog. I do not know if he gave the dog a monument and an epitaph, I only know that the news of the good dog's death spread over the village, and at last reached the ears of the Bishop, together with the report that his master had given him holy burial.

The curé was summoned to appear before the Bishop, who sent a sergeant to fetch him.

"Alas!" said the curé, "what have I done, and why have I to appear before the Bishop? I am much surprised at receiving this summons."

"As for me," said the sergeant, "I do not know what it is for, unless it is because you buried your dog in the holy ground which is reserved for the bodies of Christians."

"Ah," thought the curé to himself, "that must be it," and it occurred to him that he had done wrong, but he knew that he could easily escape being put into prison, by paying a fine, for the Lord Bishop—God be praised—was the most avaricious prelate in the Kingdom, and only kept those about him who knew how to bring grist to the mill.

"At any rate I shall have to pay, and it may as well be soon as late."

On the appointed day, he appeared before the Bishop, who immediately delivered a long sermon about the sin of burying a dog in consecrated ground, and enlarged on the offence so wonderfully that he made it appear that the curé had done something worse than deny God; and at the end he ordered the curé to be put in prison.

When the curé found that he was to be shut up in the stone box, he demanded permission to be heard, and the Bishop gave him leave to speak.

You must know that there were a number of notable

persons at this convocation—the judge, the prosecutor, the secretaries, and notaries, advocates, and procureurs, who were all much amused at this unusual case of the poor curé who had buried his dog in consecrated ground.

The curé spoke briefly in his defence, to this effect:

“Truly, my Lord Bishop, if you had known my poor dog as well as I did, you would not be surprised that I gave him Christian burial, for his like was never seen;” and then he began to recount his doings.

“And as he was so good and wise when he was living, he was still more so at his death; for he made a beautiful will, and, as he knew your poverty and need, he left you fifty golden crowns, which I now bring you.”

So saying, he drew the money from his bosom and gave it to the Bishop, who willingly received it, and greatly praised the good dog, and approved of his will, and was glad to know that he had received honourable sepulture.

XCVII

BIDS AND BIDDINGS

By MONSEIGNEUR DE LAUNOY

Of a number of boon companions making good cheer and drinking at a tavern, and how one of them had a quarrel with his wife when he returned home, as you will hear.

A number of good fellows had once assembled to make good cheer at the tavern and drink as much as they could. And when they had eaten and drunk to God's praise and "usque ad Hebreos,"¹ and had paid their reckoning, some of them began to say: "How shall we be received by our wives when we return home?" "God knows if we shall be excommunicated." "They will pluck us by the beard." "By Our Lady!" said one, "I am afraid to go home." "God help me! so am I," said another. "I shall be sure to hear a sermon for Passion Sunday." "Would to God that my wife were dumb—I should drink more boldly than I do now."

So spoke all of them with one exception, and that was a good fellow who said:

"How now, good sirs? You all seem every miserable, and each has a wife who forbids him to go to the tavern, and is displeased if you drink. Thank God my wife is not one of that sort, for if I drink ten—or even a hundred—times a day that is not enough for her,—in short,

¹ A pun on the word ebreos (drunken).

I never knew an instance in which she did not wish I had drunk as much again. For, when I come back from the tavern she always wishes that I had the rest of the barrel in my belly, and the barrel along with it. Is not that a sign that I do not drink enough to please her?"

When his companions heard this argument they began to laugh, and all praised his wife, and then each one went his own way.

The good fellow we have mentioned went home, where he found his wife not over friendly, and ready to scold him; and as soon as she saw him, she began the usual lecture, and, as usual, she wished the rest of the barrel in his belly.

"Thank you, my dear, you are always much kinder than all the other women in the town, for they all get wild if their husbands drink too much, but you—may God repay you—always wish that I may have a good draught that would last me all my days."

"I don't know that I wish that," she said, "but I pray to God that you may drink such a lot some day that you may burst."

Whilst they were conversing thus affectionately, the soup-kettle on the fire began to boil over, because the fire was too hot, and the good man, who noticed that his wife did not take it off the fire, said:

"Don't you see, wife, that the pot is boiling over?"

She was still angry and indignant, and replied:

"Yes, master, I see it."

"Well, then, take it off, confound you! Do as I bid you."

"I will," she replied, "I will bid twelve pence."¹

¹ There is a pun in the French on the two meanings of the verb hausser,—“to raise” and to “augment” or “run up.”

"Oh, indeed, dame," said he, "is that your reply? Take off that pot, in God's name!"

"Well!" she said. "I will put it at seven 'sous.' Is that high enough?"

"Ha, ha!" he said. "By St. John that shall not pass without three blows with a good stick."

He picked up a thick stick, and laid it with all his might across her back, saying as he did so:

"The lot is knocked down to you."

She began to cry, and the neighbours all assembled and asked what was the matter? The good man told them and they all laughed—except the woman who had had the lot knocked down to her.

XCVIII

THE UNFORTUNATE LOVERS

By THE EDITOR

Of a knight of this kingdom and his wife, who had a fair daughter aged fifteen or sixteen. Her father would have married her to a rich old knight, his neighbour, but she ran away with another knight, a young man who loved her honourably; and, by strange mishap, they both died sad deaths without having ever cohabited,—as you will hear shortly.

In the frontiers of France, there lived, amongst other nobles, a knight who was rich and noble, not only by illustrious descent, but by his own virtuous and honourable deeds, who had, by the wife he had married, an only daughter, a very beautiful virgin, well educated as her condition required, and aged fifteen or sixteen years, or thereabouts.

This good and noble knight, seeing that his daughter was of a fit and proper age for the holy sacrament of wedlock, much wished to give her in marriage to a knight, his neighbour, who was powerful, not so much by noble birth as by great possessions and riches, and was also from 60 to 80 years old, or thereabouts.

This wish so filled the head of the father of whom I spoke, that he would not rest until formal promises were made between him and his wife, the mother of the girl,

and the aforesaid old knight, touching his marriage to the girl, who, for her part, knew and suspected nothing of all these arrangements, promises, and treaties.

Not far from the castle of the knight, the father of this damsel, there lived another knight, a young man, valiant and brave, and moderately rich, but not so rich as the old man of whom I spoke, and this youth was greatly in love with the fair damsel. She also was much attached to him, on account of his fame and great renown, and they often spoke to each other, though with much trouble and difficulty, for her father, who suspected their love, tried by all ways and means to prevent their seeing each other. Nevertheless, he could not destroy the great and pure love which united their hearts, and when fortune favoured them with an opportunity, they discussed nothing but the means whereby they might accomplish their whole and sole desire and marry each other.

The time approached when the damsel was to be given to the old knight, and her father told her of the contract he had made, and named the day on which she was to be married; at which she was greatly angered, but thought to herself that she might find a way out of the difficulty.

She sent a message to her lover, the young knight, to tell him to come to her secretly as soon as he could; and when he came she told him how she was betrothed to the old knight, and asked her lover's advice as to how this marriage was to be broken off, for that she would never have any other man but him.

The knight replied:

"My dearest lady, since of your kindness you offer me that which I should never have dared to ask without great shame, I thank you humbly, and if it be your will, I will tell you what we will do. We will appoint a day

for me to come to this town accompanied by many of my friends, and at a given hour you will repair to a certain place, both of which we will arrange now that I am alone with you. You will mount on my horse, and I will conduct you to my castle. And then, if we can manage to pacify your father and mother, we will fulfil our promises of plighted troth."

She replied that the plan was a good one, and she would carry it out properly. She told him that on such a day, at such an hour, he would find her at a certain place, and that she would do all that he had arranged.

The appointed day arrived, and the young knight appeared at the place mentioned, and there he found the lady, who mounted on his horse, and they rode fast until they were far from there.

The good knight, fearing that he should fatigue his dearly beloved mistress, slackened his speed, and spread his retainers on every road to see that they were not followed, and he rode across the fields, without keeping to any path or road, and as gently as he could, and charged his servants that they should meet at a large village which he named, and where he intended to stop and eat. This village was remote, and away from the high road.

They rode until they came to this village, where the local "fête" was being held, which had brought together all sorts of people. They entered the best tavern in the place, and at once demanded food and drink, for it was late after dinner, and the damsel was much fatigued. A good fire was made, and food prepared for the servants of the knight who had not yet arrived.

Hardly had the knight and the lady entered the tavern than there came four big swashbucklers—waggoners or

drovers, or perhaps worse—who noisily entered the tavern, and demanded where was the “bona roba” that some ruffian had brought there, riding behind him on his horse, for they would drink with her and amuse themselves with her.

The host, who knew the knight well, and was aware that the rascals spake not the truth, told them gently that the girl was not what they imagined.

“Morableu!” they replied; “if you do not bring her at once, we will batter down the door, and bring her by force in spite of the two of you.”

When the host heard this, and found that his explanation was no use, he named the knight, who was renowned through all that district, but unknown to many of the common people, because he had long been out of the country, acquiring honour and renown in wars in distant countries. The host told them also that the damsel was a young virgin, a relative of the knight, and of noble parentage.

“You can, messieurs,” he said, “without danger to yourselves or others, quench your lust with many of the women who have come to the village on the occasion of the ‘fete’ expressly for you and the like of you, and for God’s sake leave in peace this noble damsel and think of the great danger that you run, the evil that you wish to commit and the small hope that you have of success.”

“Drop your sermons,” shouted the rascals, inflamed with carnal lust, “and bring her to us quietly; or if not we will cause a scandal, for we will bring her down openly, and each of us four will do as he likes with her.”

These speeches being finished, the good host went up to the chamber where the knight and the damsel were, and called the knight apart, and told him this news,

which when he had heard, without being troubled in the least, he went down wearing his sword, to talk to the four swashbucklers, and asked them politely what they wanted?

And they, being foul-mouthed and abusive blackguards, replied that they wanted the "bona roba" that he kept shut up in his chamber, and that, if he did not give her up quietly, they would take her from him by force.

"Fair sirs," said the knight, "if you knew me well you would be aware that I should not take about women of that sort. I have never done such a folly, thank God. And even if I ever did—which God forbid—I should never do it in this district, where I and all my people are well known—my nobility and reputation would not suffer me to do it. This damsel is a young virgin, a near relative, related also to a noble house, and we are travelling for our pleasure, accompanied by my servants, who although they are not here at present, will come directly, and I am waiting for them. Moreover, do not flatter yourselves that I should be such a coward as to let her be insulted, or suffer injury of any kind; but I would protect and defend her as long as my strength endured, and until I died."

Before the knight had finished speaking, the villains interrupted him, and in the first place denied that he was the person he said, because he was alone, and that knights never travelled without a great number of servants. Therefore they recommended him, if he were wise, to bring the girl down, otherwise they would take her by force, whatever consequences might ensue.

When this brave and valiant knight found that fair words were of no use, and that force was the only rem-

edy, he summoned up all his courage, and resolved that the villains should not have the damsel, and that he was ready to die in her defence.

At last one of the four advanced to knock with his bludgeon at the door of the chamber, and the others followed him, and were bravely beaten back by the knight. Then began a fight which lasted long, and although the two parties were so unequally matched, the good knight vanquished and repulsed the four villains, and as he pursued them to drive them away, one of them, who had a sword, turned suddenly and plunged it in the body of the knight, and pierced him through, so that he fell dead at once, at which they were very glad. Then they compelled the host to quietly bury the body in the garden of the inn.

When the good knight was dead, the villains came and knocked at the door of the chamber where the damsel was impatiently awaiting the return of her lover, and they pushed open the door.

As soon as she saw the brigands enter, she guessed that the knight was dead, and said:

“Alas, where is my protector? Where is my sole refuge? What has become of him? Why does he thus wound my heart and leave me here alone?”

The scoundrels, seeing that she was much troubled, thought to falsely deceive her by fair words, and told her the knight had gone to another house, and had commanded them to go to her and protect her; but she would not believe them, for her heart told her that they had killed him. She began to lament, and to cry more bitterly than ever.

“What is this?” they said. “Why all these tricks and

manners? Do you think we don't know you? If you imagine your bully is still alive, you are mistaken—we have rid the country of him. Therefore make your mind up that we are all four going to enjoy you." At these words one of them advanced, and seized her roughly, saying that he would have her company.

When the poor damsel saw herself thus forced, and that she could not soften their hearts, she said:

"Alas! sirs, since you will force me, and my humble prayers cannot soften you, at least have this decency; that if I abandon myself to you it shall be privately, that is to say each separately without the presence of the others."

They agreed to this, though with a bad grace, and then they made her choose which of the four should first have her company. She chose the one that she fancied was the mildest and best-tempered, but he was the worst of all. The door was closed, and then the poor damsel threw herself at the scoundrel's feet, and with many piteous appeals, begged that he would have pity on her. But he was obstinate, and declared that he would have his will of her.

When she saw that he was so cruel, and that her prayers could not melt him, she said:

"Well then, since so it must be, I am content; but I beg of you to close the windows that we may be more secret."

He willingly consented, and whilst he was closing them, she drew a little knife that she wore at her girdle, and uttering one long, piteous cry, she cut her throat, and gave up the ghost.

When the scoundrel saw her lying on the ground, he fled along with his companions, and it is to be supposed

that they were afterwards punished according to their deserts.

Thus did these two sweet lovers end their days, one directly after the other, without ever having tasted of the joys and pleasures in which they hoped to have lived together all their days.

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THE METAMORPHOSIS

By the EDITOR

Relates how a Spanish Bishop, not being able to procure fish, ate two partridges on a Friday, and how he told his servants that he had converted them by his prayers into fish—as will more plainly be related below.¹

If you wish, you shall hear now, before it is too late, a little story about a brave Spanish Bishop who went to Rome to transact some business for his master the King of Castille.

This brave prelate, whom I intend to make furnish this last story, arrived one day at a little village in Lombardy, it being then early on a Friday evening, and ordered his steward to have supper early, and to go into the town and buy what he could, for he (the Bishop) was very hungry, not having broken his fast all that day.

His servant obeyed him, and went to the market, and to all the fishmongers in the town, to procure some fish, but, to make the story short, not a single fish, in spite of all the efforts made by the steward, could be found.

But, on returning to the inn, he met a countryman,

¹ Also from Poggios Facetiæ (Sacerdotis vitus). Several of the saints have performed the same miracle in order to avoid the terrible sin of eating meat on a Friday. It was amongst the meritorious acts of one—St. Johannes Crucis—who was canonized as recently as 1840.

who had two fine partridges which he would sell very cheaply. The steward thought he would secure them, and they would serve to make the Bishop a feast on Sunday.

He bought them, a great bargain, and came to his master with the two partridges in his hand, all alive, and fat, and plump, and told him of his failure to get any fish, at which my Lord was not best pleased.

"And what can we have for supper?"

"My Lord," replied the steward, "I will get them to prepare you eggs in a hundred thousand different ways, and you can have apples and pears. Our host has also some rich cheese. We will do our best; have patience, a supper is soon over, and you shall fare better to-morrow, God willing. We shall be in a town which is much better provided with fish than this, and on Sunday you cannot fail to dine well, for here are two partridges which are plump and succulent."

The Bishop looked at the two partridges, and found them as the steward said, plump, and in good condition, so he thought they would take the place of the fish which he had lost. So he caused them to be killed and prepared for the spit.

When the steward saw that his master wished to have them roasted, he was astounded, and said to his master:

"My lord, it is well to kill them, but to roast them now for Sunday seems a pity."

But the steward lost his time, for, in spite of his remonstrances, they were put on the spit and roasted.

The good prelate watched them cooking, and the poor steward was scandalized, and did not know what to make of his master's ill-ordered appetite.

When the partridges were roasted, the table laid, the

wine brought in, eggs cooked in various ways, and served to a turn, the prelate seated himself, said grace, and asked for the partridges, with mustard.

His steward wished to know what his master would do with these birds, and brought them to him fresh from the fire, and emitting an odour enough to make a friar's mouth water.

The good Bishop attacked the partridges, and began to cut and eat with such haste, that he did not give his squire, who came to carve for him, sufficient time to lay his bread, and sharpen his knife.

When the steward saw his master eating the birds, he was so amazed that he could no longer keep silent, and said to him:

"Oh, my Lord, what are you doing? Are you a Jew or a Saracen, that you do not keep Friday? By my faith, I am astonished at such doings."

"Hold your tongue! Hold your tongue!" said the good prelate, who had his hands and his beard covered with fat and gravy. "You are a fool, and know not what you are saying. I am doing no harm. You know well and believe, that by the words spoken by me and other priests, we make of the host, which is nothing but flour and water, the precious body of Jesus Christ. Can I not by the same means?—I who have seen so many things at the court of Rome and many other places—know by what words I may transform these partridges, which are flesh, into fish, although they still retain the form of partridges? So indeed I have done. I have long known how to do this. They were no sooner put to the fire than by certain words I know, I so charmed them that I converted them into the substance of fish, and you might—all of you who are here—eat, as I do, without sin. But

as you would still believe them to be flesh, they would do you harm, so I alone will commit the sin."

The steward and the other attendants began to laugh, and pretended to believe the highly-coloured story that their master had told them, and ever after that were up to the trick, and related it joyously in many places.

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THE CHASTE LOVER

By PHILIPPE DE LAON

Of a rich merchant of the city of Genoa, who married a fair damsel, who, owing to the absence of her husband, sent for a wise clerk—a young, fit, and proper man—to help her to that of which she had need; and of the fast that he caused her to make—as you will find more plainly below.

In the powerful and well-populated city of Genoa, there lived, some time ago, a merchant who was very rich, and whose business consisted in sending much merchandise by sea to foreign lands, and especially to Alexandria. So occupied was he with the management of his ships, and in heaping up riches, that during all his days, from his tender youth till the time that he was fifty years of age, he never cared or wanted to do anything else.

When he had arrived at this last mentioned age, he began to think about his condition, and to see that he had spent and employed all his days and years in heaping up riches without ever having for a single minute or moment been inclined to think of marrying and having children, to whom the great wealth, that he had by great diligence and labour amassed and acquired, would succeed. This thought caused him much mental sorrow, and he was greatly vexed that he had thus spent his youth.

This grief and regret lasted many days, during which

time it happened that in the above-named city, the young children, after they had solemnized some festival, did as they were accustomed each year, and variously apparelled and disguised, some this way and some that, came in great numbers to the place where the public rejoicings of the city are usually held, to play in the presence of their fathers and mothers, and to have their costumes praised and admired.

At this assembly was our merchant, still moody and vexed, and the sight of so many fathers and mothers taking pleasure in watching their children dance and sport, increased the grief that was preying on his mind, and, unable to watch them any longer, he returned to his house, sad and vexed, and retired to his lonely chamber, where he remained some time, uttering complaints of this kind:

"Ah, poor, miserable, old man that I am and always have been, and for whom fate and destiny are hard, bitter, and unpleasant. Oh, wretched man! worn out and weary by watching and work, suffered and borne by land and sea. Your great riches and heaped-up treasures, which with many perilous adventures, hard work, and sweat you have amassed, and for which you have expended all your time, are but vain, for you have never thought who will possess them, and to whom by human law you should leave your memory and your name when you are dead and gone. Oh, wicked man, how could you have been careless of that of which you should have taken most heed? Marriage never pleased you, and you always feared and refused it, and even disliked and scorned the good and just counsels of those who would have found you a wife, in order that you might have offspring who would perpetuate your name, your praise,

and your renown. Oh, how happy are those parents who leave good and wise children to succeed them! How many fathers have I seen to-day playing with their children, who would call themselves most happy, and think they had well employed their time, if, after their decease, they could leave their children but one small part of the great wealth that I possess! But what pleasure and solace can I ever have? What name or fame shall I leave after my death? Where is the son who will cherish my memory when I am dead? Blessed be that holy condition of marriage by which the memory and recollection of fathers is preserved, and by which fiefs, possessions, and heritages are permanently secured to their happy children!"

When the good merchant had thus argued to himself for a long time, he suddenly thought of a remedy for his misfortunes, saying:

"Well, I am in future determined, notwithstanding the number of my years, not to trouble or torment myself with grief, or remorse. At the worst I have but been like the birds, which prepare their nests before they begin to lay their eggs. I have, thank God, riches sufficient for myself, wife, and many children, if it should happen that I have any, nor am I so old, or so devoid of natural vigour, as to lose hope of even having any offspring. What I have to do is to watch and work, and use every endeavour to discover where I shall find a wife fit and proper for me."

Having finished his soliloquy, he left his chamber, and sent for two of his comrades—merchant-mariners like himself—and to them he plainly stated his case and requested them to help to find him a wife, for that was the thing he most desired in the world.

The two merchants, having heard what their comrade had to say, much applauded his determination, and undertook to make all possible endeavours to find him a wife.

Whilst they were making enquiries, our merchant,—as hot to get married as he could be—played the gallant, and sought throughout the city all the youngest and prettiest girls—to the others he paid small heed.

He searched so well that he found one such as he required,—born of honest parents, marvellously beautiful, aged only fifteen or thereabouts, gentle, good-tempered, and well brought up in every respect.

As soon as he knew her virtues and good qualities, he felt such affection and desire that she should be his lawful wife, that he asked her hand of her parents and friends; which, after some slight difficulties that were quickly removed, was given, and the same hour they were betrothed, and security given by him for the dower he was to bestow upon her.

If the good merchant had taken pride and pleasure in his merchandise during the time that he was amassing a fortune, he felt still more when he saw himself certain of being married, and that to a wife by whom he could have fine children.

The wedding was honourably celebrated with all due pomp, and that feast being over and finished, he forgot all about his former life,—that is to say on the sea—but lived happily and in great pleasure with his fair and fond wife.

But this way of life did not last long, for he soon became tired and bored, and before the first year had expired took a dislike to living at home in idleness and a humdrum domestic existence, and pined for his old busi-

ness of merchant-mariner, which seemed to him easier and more pleasant than that which he had so willingly undertaken to manage night and day.

He did nothing but devise how he could get to Alexandria, as he used in the old days, and it seemed to him that it was not only difficult but impossible for him to abstain from going to sea. Yet though he firmly resolved to return to his old profession, he concealed his intention from his wife, fearing that she might be displeased.

There were also fears and doubts which disturbed him, and prevented him from executing his designs, for he knew the youth and character of his wife, and he felt sure that if he were absent she would not be able to control herself; and he considered also the mutability and variability of the feminine character, and that the young gallants were accustomed to pass in front of his house to see his wife, even when he was at home,—whence he imagined that in his absence they might come closer, and peradventure even take his place.

For a long time he was tormented by these difficulties and suspicions without saying a word, but as he knew that he had lived the best part of his life, he now cared little for wife, marriage, and all that concerned domestic life, and to the arguments and theories which filled his head, provided a speedy solution by saying:

“It is better to live than to die, and, if I do not quit my household very shortly, it is very certain that I shall not live. But then, shall I leave my fair and affectionate wife? Yes, I will leave her;—she shall henceforth manage for herself as she pleases; it will no longer be incumbent on me. Alas, what shall I do? What a dishonour, what an annoyance it would be for me if she did

not continue to guard her chastity. Ah, yes, it is better to live than to die, that I may be able to look after her! But God cannot wish that I should take such care and pains about a woman's belly without any pay or reward, and receive nothing in return but torture of soul and body. I will not bear all the trouble and anguish of mind that many suffer in living with their wives. It angers me and saddens me to think that God only permits me to live to enjoy the trifling incidents of married life. I want full liberty and freedom to do what I please."

When the good merchant had finished these sage reflections, he went and found some of his old comrades, and told them that he wished to visit Alexandria with a cargo of merchandise, as he had often previously done in their company—but he did not tell them of the trouble and anxiety which his married life caused him.

He soon made all arrangements with them, and they told him to be ready to start when the first fair wind came. The sailors and cargo were soon ready, and awaited in a safe place, a fair wind to start.

The good merchant, still firm in his determination, as on the previous days, found his wife alone in her chamber, and that she should not be sad at his departure, addressed her in these words:

"My dearest wife, whom I love better than my life, I beg of you to be of good heart, and show yourself joyful, and be not sad or cast down at what I am about to say to you. I propose—if it be God's pleasure—to once more visit Alexandria, as I have long been in the habit of doing; and it seems to me that you should not be vexed thereat, seeing that you are aware that that is my business and profession, by which I have acquired riches, houses, name, and fame, and many good friends. The

handsome and rich ornaments, rings, garments, and other things with which you are apparelled and ornamented as is no other woman in the city, as you well know, I have acquired by the profit I have made on my merchandise. This journey of mine therefore should not trouble you, for I shall shortly return. And I promise you that if this time,—as I hope,—Fortune should smile upon me, never will I return there again, but this time will take leave of it for ever. You must therefore be of good courage, and I will leave in your hands the disposition, administration, and management of all the goods which I possess; but before I leave I have some requests to make of you.

“The first is, I beg of you to be happy whilst I am on my voyage and live comfortably; for if I know that such is the case I shall have greater pleasure in my voyage. For the second, you know that nothing should be hidden or concealed between us two, and all honour, profit, and renown should be—as I know they are—common to both of us, and the praise and honour of the one cannot exist without the glory of the other, and similarly the dishonour of the one would be the shame of us both. I wish you to understand that I am not so devoid of sense that I am not aware that I leave you young, beautiful, kind, fresh, and tender, and without the consolation of a husband; and that many men will desire you. And although I firmly believe that you are now fully resolved, nevertheless, when I think of your age and inclinations and the warmth of your desires, it does not seem possible to me that you should not, out of pure necessity and compulsion, enjoy the company of a man during my absence. It is my will and pleasure therefore to permit you to grant those favours which nature compels you to grant.

I would beg of you though to respect our marriage vow unbroken as long as you possibly can. I neither intend nor wish to leave you in the charge of any person, but leave you to be your own guardian. Truly, there is no duenna, however watchful, who can prevent a woman from doing what she wishes. When therefore your desires shall prick and spur you on, I would beg you, my dear wife, to act with such circumspection in their execution that they may not be publicly known,—for if you do otherwise, you and I, and all our friends will be infamous and dishonoured.

“If then you cannot remain chaste, at least take pains to retain your reputation. I will teach you how that is to be done, if the need should arise. You know that in our good city there are plenty of handsome men. From amongst these choose one only, and be content to do with him whatever nature may incline you to do. At all events, I wish that in making your choice you should take particular care that he is not a vagabond, or dishonest, or disreputable person, for great dangers might arise from your acquaintance with such a person, inasmuch as he would, without doubt, publish your secret.

“You will select one therefore who is, you are sure, both wise and prudent, and who will take as much pains to conceal your amour as you do yourself. This I beg of you, and that you will promise me honestly and loyally to remember this lesson. I do not advise you to reply in the way that other women are accustomed to when similar proposals are made to them. I know what they would say, which would be somewhat to this effect: ‘Oh, husband! what do you mean speaking like that? How could you have such a cruel, unjust opinion of me? How can you imagine that I should commit such an

abominable crime? No, no! God forbid that I should make you such a promise. I will rather wish that the earth may open and swallow me up alive the day and hour—I will not say commit—but even think of committing such a sin.’

“My dear wife, I have shown you this way of replying in order that you may not use the same to me. I firmly and truly believe that at the present moment you are fully determined to remain chaste, and I desire you to remain of that opinion as long as nature will permit you. And understand that I do not wish you to break your vows unless you are unable to battle against the appetites of your frail and weak youth.”

When the good merchant had finished his speech, his fair, kind, and gentle wife, her face all suffused with blushes, trembled and could not for some moments reply to what her husband had said. Soon her blushes vanished, her confidence returned, and calling up all her courage, she replied in these words:

“My kind, and greatly beloved husband, I assure you that never have I been so disturbed and troubled by any speech I have ever heard, as I am now by your words, by which I learn something that I never heard or guessed. You know my simplicity, youth, and innocence, and you say that it is not possible at my age to avoid committing such a fault, and that you are sure and know positively that when you are away I shall not be able to preserve our marriage vow in its integrity. That speech greatly vexed my heart, and made me tremble, and I do not know how I can reply to your arguments. You have deprived me of the reply I should have made, but I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that with joined hands I beg most humbly of God that he may

cause an abyss to open in which I may be thrown, that my limbs may be torn off, and that I may suffer a most cruel death, if ever the day comes when I shall not only be disloyal to our marriage vow, but even think for a brief moment of being disloyal. How, and in what manner I could be brought to commit such a crime, I am unable to comprehend. And as you have forbidden me to reply as I should, telling me that women are accustomed to make elusive and false excuses, I will to give you pleasure, and allay your suspicions, and that you may see that I am ready to obey and keep your commands, promise you this moment with firm and immutable faith and constancy, to await the day of your return in true, pure, and entire chastity of body, and may God forbid that the contrary should happen. Be fully assured that I will obey your orders in every respect. If there is anything else you wish or command, I beg of you to inform me, and I will perform your will (I desire nothing else) and not my own."

Our merchant, when he heard his wife's reply, was so overjoyed that he could not refrain from weeping, and said:

"My dearest spouse, since you have of your great kindness given me the promise that I required, I beg of you to keep it."

The following morning, the good merchant was sent for by his comrades to put to sea. So he took leave of his wife, and commended her to the care of God. Then he put to sea to sail to Alexandria where they arrived in a few days, the wind being favourable, at which place they stayed a long time both to deliver their merchandise and take in fresh cargoes.

During this time the gracious damsel of whom I have

spoken remained in the house, with, as her only companion, a little girl who served her. As I have said, this fair damsel was but fifteen years of age, therefore any fault that she committed must be imputed, not to a vicious character, but to youth and inexperience.

When the merchant had been absent many days, little by little she began to forget him. As soon as the young men of the city knew of his departure, they came to visit her. At first she would neither leave the house nor show herself, but as they continued to come daily, she, on account of the great pleasure she took in sweet and melodious songs and harmonies of all instruments, which they played outside her door, peeped through the crevices of the windows and the trellis so that she could see the musicians, and they for their part were quite willing to be seen.

In hearing these songs and dances, she took so much pleasure, that her mind was filled with love, and the natural warmth of her affections often tempted her to incontinence. So often was she visited in this manner, that in the end her concupiscence and carnal desires conquered, and she was fairly hit by the dart of love. She often thought how easy it was for her to find time and place for any lover, for no one guarded her, and no one could prevent her putting her designs in execution, and she came to the conclusion that her husband was very wise when he said he was positive that she could not preserve continence and chastity, although she wished to keep the promise she had made to him.

"It is right then," she said to herself, "for me to follow my husband's advice; by doing which I shall incur no dishonour, since he himself gave me permission, and I shall not violate the promise I made him. I remember

rightly that he charged me that if ever I broke my vow of chastity, that I should choose a man who was wise, of good fame and great virtues, and no other. That is what I will really do, as I may without disobeying my husband's instructions, and by following his good advice which was ample for my purpose. I suppose that he did not intend that the man should be old, and it seems to me that he should be young, but having as good a reputation for learning and science as any old man. Such was my husband's advice, I remember."

At the same time that the damsel was making these reflections, and was searching for a wise and prudent young man to cool her bowels, there fortunately arrived in the city a very wise young clerk, who had newly arrived from the university of Bologna, where he had been several years without once returning to his native city. Such attention had he given to his studies that there was not in all the country a clerk who enjoyed such a reputation amongst the learned men of the city, whom he assisted continually.

He was accustomed to go every day to the Town Hall on the market place, and was obliged to pass before the house of the said damsel, who was much struck by his appearance and pleasant manners. And although he had never filled any clerical office, she came to the conclusion that he was a very learned clerk, and fell deeply in love with him, saying to herself that he would be the man to guard her husband's secret; but how she was to inform him of her great and ardent love, and reveal the secret desires of her mind she knew not,—at which she was much vexed.

She bethought herself that as every day he passed before her house on his way to the market place, that she

would be upon her balcony, dressed as handsomely as possible, in order that when he passed he might notice her beauty, and so be led to desire those favours which would not be refused him.

Many times did the damsel so show herself, although that had not previously been her custom, and though she was pleasant to gaze upon, and her youthful mind was filled with thoughts of love, the wise clerk never perceived her, for in walking he glanced neither to the right nor left.

This plan of the damsel's was not as successful as she imagined it would be. She was very sorrowful, and the more she thought of the clerk, the more ardent did her desires become. At last, after a number of plans had suggested themselves to her, and which for the sake of brevity I pass over, she determined to send her little servant-maid to him. So she called her, and ordered her to go and ask for such-an-one,—that is to say, the learned clerk—and when she had found him, to tell him to come in haste to the house of such a damsel, the wife of so-and-so; and if he should ask what the damsel wanted, she was to reply that she knew not, but only knew that he was urgently required to come at once.

The little girl learned her message, and went forth to seek him; and she was soon shown a house where he was at dinner with a great company of his friends, and other people of high degree.

The girl entered the house, and saluting all the company, asked for the clerk, and delivered her message properly. The good clerk, who had been acquainted since his youth with the merchant of whom the girl spoke, and knew his house as he did his own, but was not aware that he was married or who was his wife,

imagined that during the husband's absence, the wife had need of advice on some weighty matter, for he knew that the husband was away, and had no suspicion of the cause of his invitation. He said to the girl:

"My dear, go and tell your mistress that as soon as dinner is over I will come to her."

The messenger duly delivered these words, and God knows how she was received by her mistress. When she heard that the clerk, her lover, would come, she was more joyful than ever woman was, and owing to the great joy she felt at having the clerk in the house, she trembled and did not know what to do. She caused the house to be well swept, and fair herbage to be spread in her chamber, covered the bed and the couch with rich tapestry and embroidery, and dressed and adorned herself with her most precious belongings.

Then she waited a little time, which seemed to her marvellous long on account of the great desire she had, and so impatient was she for his arrival, and that she might perceive him coming afar off, she went up to her chamber and then came down again, and went now hither, now thither, and was so excited that it seemed as though she were out of her senses.

At last she went up to her chamber, and there laid out all the riches and delicacies that she had prepared to feast her lover. She made the little servant-maid stay below to let the clerk in, and conduct him to her mistress.

When he arrived, the servant-maid received him, and let him in and closed the door, leaving his servants outside, whom she told that they were to await their master's return.

The damsel, hearing that her lover had arrived, could

not refrain from running down stairs to meet him, and she saluted him politely. Then she took his hand and led him to the chamber which she had prepared. He was much astonished when he arrived there, not only by the diversity of splendours that he saw, but also by the great beauty of the fair girl who conducted him.

As soon as they were in the chamber, she sat down on a stool by the couch, and made him sit on another by her side, and there they both sat for a certain time, without saying a word, for each waited for the other to speak, though in very different ways, for the clerk imagined that the damsel would consult him on some great and difficult matter, and wished her to begin; whilst she, on the other hand, knowing how wise and prudent he was, believed that he would know why he had been sent for without her telling him.

When she saw that he made no attempt to speak, she began, and said:

“My very dear and true friend, and learned man, I will tell you at once why I have sent for you. I believe that you are well acquainted and familiar with my husband. He has left me, in the condition you now see me, whilst he goes to Alexandria to bring back merchandise, as he has long been used. Before his departure, he told me that when he was away, he was sure that my weak and fragile nature would cause me to lose my chastity, and that necessity would compel me to have intercourse with a man to quench the natural longings I should be sure to feel after his departure. And truly I deem him a very wise man, for that which I thought impossible I find has happened, for my youth, beauty, and nature rebel against wasting away in vain. That you may understand me plainly, I will tell you that my wise and thoughtful hus-

band when he left, knew that as all young and tender plants dry and wither when they cannot fulfil the needs of their nature, so it was likely to be with me. And seeing clearly that my nature and constitution were likely to be controlled by my natural desires, which I could not long resist, he made me swear and promise that, if nature should force me to become unchaste, I would choose a wise man of good position, who would carefully guard our secret. I do not think there is in all the city a man more worthy than yourself, for you are young and very wise. I do not suppose then that you will refuse me or repel me. You see me as I am, and you may, during the absence of my husband, supply his place if you wish, and without the knowledge of any one; place, time, and opportunity all favour us."

The gentleman was much surprised and moved at what the lady said, but he concealed his emotion. He took her right hand and with a smiling face addressed her in these words:

"I ought to render infinite thanks to Dame Fortune, who has to-day given me so much pleasure, and the attainment of the greatest happiness I could have in this world; never in my life will I call myself unfortunate, since Fortune has granted me this great favour. I may certainly say that I am to-day the happiest of men, for when I consider, my beautiful and kind mistress, how we may joyously pass our days together, without any person's knowledge or interference, I almost faint with joy. Where is the man more favoured by Fortune than I am? If it were not for one thing which forms a slight obstacle to our love affair, I should be the luckiest man on earth, and I am greatly vexed and annoyed that I cannot overcome that difficulty."

When the damsel, who had never imagined that any difficulty could arise, heard that there was an obstacle which would prevent her indulging her passions, she was very sad and sorrowful, and begged him to say what it was, in order that she might find a remedy if possible.

"The obstacle," he said, "is not so great that it cannot be removed in a little time, and, since you are kind enough to wish to know what it is, I will tell you. When I was studying at the University of Bologna, the people of the city rose in insurrection against their ruler. I was accused, along with some others, my companions, of having stirred up this insurrection, and I was closely imprisoned. When I found myself in prison, and in danger of losing my life, though I knew I was innocent, I made a vow to God, promising that if He would deliver me from prison and restore me to my friends and relations in this city, I would, for love of Him, fast for a whole year on bread and water, and during that fast would not allow my body to sin. Now I have, by His aid, accomplished the greater part of the year and but little remains. I would beg of you therefore, since it is your pleasure to choose me as your lover, not to change again for any man in the world, and not to fret over the little delay that is necessary for me to accomplish my fast, and which is now but a very short time, and would have been long since over if I had dared to confide in some one else who could help me, for any days that others will fast for me are counted as though I fasted myself. And as I perceive the great love and confidence you have for me, I will, if you wish, place a trust in you that I have never put in my brothers, nor my friends, nor relations. I will ask you to help me with the remaining part of the fast to accomplish the year, that I may the sooner

aid you in the matter you have desired of me. My kind friend, I have but sixty days to fast, which—if it is your will and pleasure—I will divide in two parts, of which you shall have one and I will have the other, on condition that you promise to perform your part honestly and without fraud, and when all is completed, we will pass our days pleasantly. If therefore, you are willing to help me in the manner I have said, tell me at once.”

It is to be supposed that this long delay was hardly pleasing to the young woman, but as her lover had asked her so kindly, and also because she wished the fast to be finished, that she might accomplish her desires with her lover, and thinking also that thirty days would not much interfere with her intentions, she promised to perform her share without fraud, deception, or imposition.

The good gentleman, seeing that he had won his case and that his affairs were prospering, took leave of the damsel, (who suspected no harm) and told her that as it was on his road from his home to the market place to pass by her house, he would, without fail, often come and visit her, and so he departed.

The fair damsel began the next day her fast, making a rule for herself that during all the time of the fast she would eat nothing but bread and water until the sun had set.

When she had fasted three days, the wise clerk, as he was going to the market place at the accustomed time, called upon the lady, with whom he talked long, and then, as he was saying farewell, asked her if she had commenced the fast? She replied she had.

“Can you continue,” he said, “and keep your promise until all is finished?”

“I can entirely,” she replied, “do not fear.”

He took leave and departed, and she went on from day to day with her fast, and kept her vow as she had promised, such being her good-nature. Before she had fasted eight days, her natural heat began to decrease so much that she was forced to change her clothes and put on furs and thick garments, which are usually only worn in winter, instead of the light robes which she wore before she began the fast.

On the fifteenth day she received a visit from her lover, who found her so weak that she could hardly move about the house, but the poor simpleton was firmly resolved not to practise any trickery, so deeply in love was she, and so firmly resolved to persevere with this fast, for the sake of the joys and pleasant delights which awaited her at the termination.

The clerk, when he entered the house, and saw her so feeble, said:

“What kind of face is that, and how is your health? Now I see that you are sorry you undertook this long fast! Ah, my sweetest love! have a firm and constant mind. We have to-day achieved the half of our task: if your nature is weak, conquer it by firmness and constancy of heart, and do not break your faithful promise.”

He admonished her so kindly, that she took courage, so that it seemed to her that the remaining fifteen days would barely be noticed.

The twentieth came, and the poor simpleton had lost all colour and seemed half dead, and felt no more desires of concupiscence than if she had been really dead. She was obliged to take to her bed and continually remain there, and then it occurred to her mind that the clerk had caused her to fast to punish her carnal appetites, and she came to the conclusion that his methods were ingeni-

ous and effective, and would not have been thought of by a less clever and good man.

Nevertheless, she was not less resolved to go on to the end, and thoroughly fulfil her promise.

On the last day but one of the fast, she sent for the clerk, who, when he saw her in bed, asked her if she had lost courage now that there was only one day more to run?

But she, interrupting him, replied:

“Ah, my good friend, you loved me with a true and perfect love, and not dishonourably, as I dared to love you. Therefore I shall esteem you, as long as God gives life to me and to you, as my dearest and best friend, who protected, and taught me to protect, my chastity, and the honour and good name, of me, my husband, my relatives, and my friends. Blessed also be my dear husband, whose advice and counsels I have kept, to the great solace of my heart. But for you, my friend, I render you such thanks as I may, for your honourable conduct and your great kindness to me, for which I can never sufficiently requite you, nor can my friends.”

The good and wise clerk, seeing that he had achieved his object, took leave of the fair damsel, and gently admonished her and advised her that she should in future correct her body by abstinence and fasting whenever she felt any prickings of lust. By which means she lived chastely until the return of her husband, who knew nothing of the matter, for she concealed it from him—and so also did the clerk.

APPENDIX A

ON THE FABLIAU

By GEORGE SAINTSBURY

(From the "History of the French Novel," Vol. I, pages 90-94.
London, 1917.)

Comic tale-telling was germane to the very soul of the race, and had shown itself in "chanson" and "roman" episodes at a very early date. But it had been so abundantly, and in so popular a manner, associated with verse as a vehicle in those pieces, in the great beast-epic of "Renart," and above all in the "fabliaux" and in the earliest farces, that the connection was hard to separate. None of the stories discussed in the last chapter has, it may be noticed, the least comic touch or turn.

Few people who have ever heard of the "fabliaux" can need to be told that this realism in their case implies extreme freedom of treatment, extending very commonly to the undoubtedly coarse and not seldom to the merely dirty. There are some—most of them well known by modern imitations such as Leigh Hunt's "Palfrey"—which are quite guiltless in this respect; but the great majority deal with the usual comic farrago of satire on women, husbands, monks, and other stock "sculduddery." To translate some of the more amusing, one would require not merely Chaucerian license of treatment but Chaucerian peculiarities of dialect in order to avoid mere vulgarity. Even Prior, who is our only modern English fabliau-writer of real literary merit—the work of people like Hanbury Williams and Hall Stevenson being mostly mere pornography—could hardly have managed such a piece as "Le Sot Chevalier"—a riotously "improper" but excessively funny example—without running the risk of losing that recommendation of being "a lady's book" with which Johnson rather capriciously tempered his more general undervaluation. Sometimes, on the other hand, the joke is trivial enough, as in the English-French word-play of *anel* for *agnel* (or-neau), which substitutes "donkey" for "lamb"; or, in

the other, on the comparison of a proper name, "Estula," with its component syllables "es tu la?" But the important point on the whole is that, proper or improper, romantic or trivial, they all exhibit a constant improvement in the mere art of telling; in discarding of the stock phrases, the long-winded speeches, and the general "paraphernalia" of verse; in sticking and leading up smartly to the point; in coining sharp, lively phrase; in the co-ordination of incident and the excision of superfluities. Often they passed without difficulty into direct dramatic presentation in short farces. But on the whole their obvious destiny was to be "unrhymed" and to make their appearance in the famous form of the "nouvelle" or "novella," in regard to which it is hard to say whether Italy was most indebted to France for substance, or France to Italy for form.

It was not, however, merely the intense conservatism of the Middle Ages as to literary form which kept back the prose "nouvelle" to such an extent that, as we have seen, only a few examples survive from the two whole centuries between 1200 and 1400, while not one of these is of the kind most characteristic ever since, or at least until quite recent days, of French tale telling. The French octosyllabic couplet, in which the "fabliaux" were without exception or with hardly an exception composed, can, in a long story, become very tiresome because of its want of weight and grasp, and the temptations it offers to a weak rhymester to stuff it with endless tags. But for a short tale in deft hands it can apply its lightness in the best fashion, and put its points with no lack of sting. The "fabliau" writer or reciter was not required—one imagines that he would have found scant audiences if he had tried it—to spin a long yarn; he had got to come to his jokes and his business pretty rapidly; and, as La Fontaine has shown to thousands who have never known—perhaps have never heard of—his early masters, he had an instrument which would answer to his desires perfectly if only he knew how to finger it.

At the same time, both the lover of poetry and the lover of tale must acknowledge that, though alliance between them is not in the least an unholy one, and has produced great and charming children, the best of the poetry is always a sort of extra bonus or solace to the tale, and the tale not unfrequently seems as if it could get on better without the poetry. The one can only aspire somewhat irrelevantly; the other can never attain quite its full development. So it was no ill day when the prose "nouvelle" came to its own in France.

The first remarkable collection was the famous "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles," traditionally attributed to Louis XI when Dauphin and an exile in Brabant, with the assistance of friends and courtiers, but more recently selected by critics that way minded as part of the baggage they have "commandeered" for Antoine de la Salle. The question of authorship is of scarcely the slightest importance to us; though the point last mentioned is worth mentioning, because we shall have to notice the favoured candidate in this history again. There are certainly some of the hundred that he might have written.

In the careless way in which literary history used to be dealt with, the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles" were held to be mere imitation of the "Decameron" and other Italian things. It is, of course, much more than probable that the Italian "novella" had not a little to do with the precipitation of the French "nouvelle" from its state of solution in the "fabliau." But the person or persons who, in imitating the "Decameron," produced the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles" had a great deal more to do—and did a great deal less—than this mere imitation of their original. As for a group of included tales, the already-mentioned "Seven Wise Masters"¹ was known in France much before Boccaccio's time. The title was indeed admittedly Italian, but such an obvious one as to require no positive borrowing, and there is in the French book no story framework like that of the plague and the country-house visit; no cheerful personalities like Fiammetta or Dioneo make not merely the intervals but the stories themselves alive with a special interest. Above all, there is nothing like the extraordinary mixture of unity and variety—a pure gift of genius—which succeeds in making the "Decameron" a real book as well as a bundle of narratives. Nor is there anything like the literary brilliancy of the actual style and handling.

Nevertheless, "Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles" is a book of great interest and value, despite serious defects due to its time generally and to its place in the history of fiction in particular. Its obscenity, on which even Sir Walter Scott, the least censorious of prudish-prurient of men, and with Southey, the great witness against false squeamishness, has been severe,² is unfortunately undeniable. But it is to be doubted whether Sir Walter knew much of the "fabliaux"; if he had he would have seen first, that this sort of thing had become an almost indispensable fash-

¹ Prose as well as verse.

² In the very delightful imaginative introduction to *Quentin Durward*.

ion in the short story, and secondly, that there is here considerable improvement on the "fabliaux" themselves, there being much less mere schoolboy crudity of dirty detail and phrase, though the situations may remain the same. It suffers occasionally from the heavy and rhetorical style which beset all European literature (except Italian, which itself did not wholly escape) in the fifteenth century. But still one can see in it that improvement of narrative method and diction which has been referred to: and occasionally, amid the crowd of tricky wives, tricked husbands, too obliging and too hardly treated chambermaids, ribald priests and monks, and the like, one comes across quite different things and persons, which are, as the phrase goes, almost startlingly modern, with a mixture of the unmodern heightening the appeal.

APPENDIX B

LES CENT NOUVELLES NOUVELLES

By ARTHUR TILLEY

Fellow of King's College, Cambridge

(From "The Literature of the French Renaissance," Vol. I, Chap. VI, pages 96-100. 1904.)

The two works which form the principal subjects of this and the following chapter, namely the "Heptameron" and the "Joyeux Devis," belong to a branch of literature in which the French have always excelled—the short prose tale of ordinary life. The first important collection of such tales which appeared in France was that of the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles" completed in 1462. It was the direct though not immediate descendant of the "fableau" or verse-tale, which flourished from the middle of the twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century, and which, whether it was derived from personal experience or through various intermediate agencies from Indian literary sources, was always a tale of real life. The practise of introducing stories into sermons, which began with Jacques de Vitry, Bishop of Acre in 1217, and was carried on by the Dominican and Franciscan preachers, led to the publication of collections of "exempla," as they were called, specially designed for the use of preachers. Though the stories were told in the dialect or patois of the district where the sermons were preached, they were published in Latin, so as to give them a wider circulation not only throughout France, but also in other countries.¹ We have however one interesting collection of "exempla" in the vernacular in the "Contes moralisés" of Nicole Bozon, an English Francis-

¹ Among the best known and most popular collections were those of Robert Holcot, an Oxford professor (d. 1349), John Bromyard, a Cambridge professor (d. 1418), and Johann Herolt, a native of Basle and a contemporary of Bromyard's. They were all Dominicans. See for the whole subject, A. Lecoy de la Marche, "La chaire française au moyen âge," 2nd ed. 1866, and an admirable article by F. T. Crane in the Proceedings of the American Philological Society, XXL. (1883-4), pp. 49-78.

can who wrote in Anglo-French in the first quarter of the fourteenth century.¹

The "fableau" began to die out early in the fourteenth century. Its immediate successor in Western Europe was the prose-tale of Italy, which was largely indebted to France for its materials.² Its oldest representative is generally considered to be the "Novellino," which in its original form probably dates from the close of the thirteenth century.³ It was followed by the "Cento novelle antiche," probably first collected between 1325 and 1350, the "Decameron" written about the middle of the fourteenth century, the "Novelle" of Sacchetti and the "Pecorone" of Ser Giovanni, both written during the last quarter of it. Poggio's Latin "Facetiae" belong to the early part of the next century.

It was not, as we have seen, till the year 1482 that the "fableau" reappeared in France in the form of the prose-tale, as we have it in the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles." The caustic but good-natured humour of these stories and the license alike of subject matter and expression leave us no doubt as to their ancestry, nor must their uniform coarseness blind us to their undeniable merits as specimens of the story-telling art. The work was first printed in 1486. Shortly before this Masuccio's "Novellino" (1476 and Sabbadino degli Arienti's "Novelle Porretane" (1483) had been added to the Italian story-books, and the Decameron had been published in a French version by Verard (1485). This was a translation, or rather paraphrase, made from a Latin version by Laurent du Premierfait for Jean Duc de Berry at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It was not badly written and it enjoyed considerable popularity, going through numerous editions until, as we have seen, it was superseded in 1545 by the translation of Le Macon.

About the same time as the publication of the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles" and the French "Decameron" some of Poggio's "Facetiae" were rendered into French by Guillaume Tardif, who has already been mentioned as the translator of Valla's "Facetiae morales."⁴ His work is an expansion rather than a translation, the dry and concise statements of the original being transformed into lively and dramatic pictures. Subsequent writers of prose-

¹ Edited for the Société des anciens textes français by Lucy Toulmin Smith and P. Meyer (1889).

² See M. Landau, "Die Quellen des Dekameron," 2nd ed. Stuttgart, 1884.

³ See A. d'Ancona in "Romania," II, 385 ff.

⁴ Ante, p. 40.

tales could hardly have found a better or more suggestive model.¹

The only other French collection of stories that appeared in print before the opening of the reign of Francis I was that completed in 1372 by the Chevalier de la Tour Landry for the instruction of his three daughters, and first printed in 1514. The stories are taken from the Bible, the "*Gesta Romanorum*," chronicles, and other sources, and, like those of the "*Gesta*," have a "morality" appended to them.²

The popularity of the short tale at this period is again shown by its use in the pulpit. As in the thirteenth century, the popular preachers, Menot, Maillard and others won the attention of their hearers by the liberal use of stories.³ Moreover, the old collections of "*exempla*" were printed and reprinted, especially Herolt's "*Promptuarium*," which was translated into French under the title of "*Fleur des Commandements de Dieu*." The same preacher's "*Sermones Discipuli*" attained an even greater popularity. Thus, when the reign of Francis I opened, a teller of short stories relating to ordinary life was sure of an audience, and there were open to him many storehouses which he could plunder at will.

The first additions to the French story-books that were made during the reign of Francis I were translations. First came a version of 149 tales from the "*Gesta*," printed in 1521 under the title of "*Le Violier des histoires romaines*" and thrice reprinted in the course of the next few years.⁴ Then years later appeared a small collection taken principally from Boccaccio and Poggio under the title of "*Le Parangon des nouvelles honnestes et de-*

¹ Brunet mentions an edition by Jean Trepperel, who printed from 1491 to 1511, but his description is only at second hand and no copy of it is known to exist. In the Rothschild library there is an edition printed by Trepperel's widow, who printed from 1522 to 1527 (Harrisse, *op. cit.*, XLVIII). There is also an edition in the Bib. de l'Arsenal, apparently later, which has been reprinted by Montaignon (1878). The edition of the *veuve Trepperel* contains 115 *facetiæ* out of the 273 of the printed editions of the Latin text. The MSS. generally have 330, and one has as many as 381. For a detailed account of Tardif's translation see "*Vierteljahrsschrift für Kultur und Litteratur der Renaissance*," ed. L. Geiger, 1, 309 ff.

² There is a modern edition by A. de Montaignon in the Bib. Elzévirienne, 1854. There are two English versions of it, one made by Caxton (see Blade's "*Caxton*," 2nd ed., pp. 274 ff.), and another, of superior merit, made some half a century later, which has been edited by Wright for the Early English Text Society, 1868. There is a good article on the work in the *Retrospective Review*, 2nd Ser., I, 177 ff., 1827.

³ See Introductory Essay, pp. 178-181.

⁴ There is a modern edition by G. Brunet, 1858.

lectables.”¹ For Poggio the translation of Macho was used, but for Boccaccio, whose beautiful story of “The Falcon” opens the volumes, the compiler had recourse to a translation by some unknown writer. The collection also included some of Valla’s Apologues or “Facetiae morales,” and five taken from the famous “Ulenspiegel.” In the following year (1532) “Ulenspiegel” was published in French in a more complete form, the translation being made from the Flemish version, which contains forty-six stories out of the ninety-six of the earlier German versions.²

It was not till the year 1535 that a Frenchman followed in the footsteps of the author of the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles” by writing original tales. His name was Nicolas of Troyes, and he called his collection, which was completed on March 1, 1537, “Le grand Parangon des nouvelles nouvelles.”³ The manuscript, which, so far as is known, was never printed until recent years, was in two volumes, but only one has come down to us.⁴ It contains 180 stories, of which about fifty are original. Of the rest sixty are taken from the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,” fifty-five from Boccaccio, the same translation being used as in the older “Parangon,” and ten from the “Violier.” The longest is an arrangement of some of the least edifying scenes of the “Cesestina,” of which, as we have seen, a French translation had appeared in 1527. Of the tales written by Nicolas himself some, he says, had been told by “bons compagnons,” while others related to events which he had witnessed, or in which he had actually taken part. He was a saddler by trade, and possibly, as Mabilie has suggested, saddler to the Court. At the time when he wrote his book he was living at Tours, and several of the stories relate to that place. The scene of others is laid at Amboise, of others in Poitou, while several have to do with the writer’s birthplace, Troyes, or with other places in Champagne.

In the general character of his stories and in his manner of relating them Nicolas of Troyes comes nearest to the author of

¹ Lyons, 1531; reprinted 1532 and 1533. There is a modern edition by E. Mabilie.

² Nouvellement translate et corrige de Flamant en francoys, 1532. The original version was in Low-Saxon, but the earliest known version is a High-German one printed at Strasburg in 1521. The Flemish version was printed at Antwerp between 1520 and 1530 (C. H. Herford, “Literary Relations Between England and Germany,” Cambridge, 1886, pp. 283 ff.).

³ The author says March 1, 1536, but this must be 1536/7, as one of the stories relates to an event which happened in May, 1536.

⁴ In the Bib. Nationale. E. Mabilie has edited from it a selection of fifty-five stories, 1869.

the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles." He has the same direct and natural style, without the caustic humour, but with more point and incision, the same love of his story for the story's sake, the same moral indifference and the same coarseness. This very indifference makes his picture of social life all the more faithful. We more readily believe in his stories of the cruelty and oppression of great lords, of the injustice of judges, of the ignorance and licentiousness of monks, because he writes as a pure "conteur" without any bias, either religious, or moral, or political, and because he does not exclude stories which give the other side of the picture. But all this shows that he and his work belong to the old rather than the new order of things.¹

¹ There is still unprinted a collection of stories by Phillippe de Vigneulles, a hosier of Metz, which was completed in 1515, and which appears also to have been modelled on "Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles." I only know it from the account of it by H. Michelant, "Gedenkbuch des Metzger Burgers P. von Vigneulles in the Bibliothek des Litt. Vereins," Stuttgart, 1852, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

APPENDIX C

THE MERRIE TALES

By ROBERT B. DOUGLAS ¹

The highest living authority on French Literature—Professor George Saintsbury—has said:

“The ‘Cent Nouvelles’ is undoubtedly the first work of literary prose in French, and the first, moreover, of a long and most remarkable series of literary works in which French writers may challenge all comers with the certainty of victory. The short prose tale of a comic character is the one French literary product the pre-eminence and perfection of which it is impossible to dispute, and the prose tale first appears to advantage in the ‘Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles.’ The subjects are by no means new. They are simply the old themes of the ‘fabliaux’ treated in the old way. The novelty is in the application of prose to such a purpose, and in the crispness, the fluency, and the elegance, of the prose used.”

Besides the literary merits which the eminent critic has pointed out, the stories give us curious glimpses of life in the 15th Century. We get a genuine view of the social condition of the nobility and the middle classes, and are pleasantly surprised to learn from the mouths of the nobles themselves that the peasant was not the down-trodden serf that we should have expected to find him a century after the Jacquerie, and 350 years before the Revolution.

In fact there is an atmosphere of tolerance, not to say “bonhomie” about these stories which is very remarkable when we consider under what circumstances they were told, and by whom, and to whom.

This seems to have struck M. Lenient, a French critic, who says:

“Generally the incidents and personages belong to the ‘bour-

¹ From The Edition of 1899. 2 vols. Charles Carrington. Paris.

geoisie'; there is nothing chivalric, nothing wonderful; no dreamy lovers, romantic dames, fairies, or enchanters. Noble dames, bourgeois, nuns, knights, merchants, monks, and peasants mutually dupe each other. The lord deceives the miller's wife by imposing on her simplicity, the miller retaliates in much the same manner. The shepherd marries the knight's sister, and the nobleman is not over-scandalised.

"The vices of the monks are depicted in half a score tales, and the seducers are punished with a severity not always in proportion to the offence."

It seems curious that this valuable and interesting work has never before been translated into English during the four and a half centuries the book has been in existence. This is the more remarkable as the work was edited in French by an English scholar—the late Thomas Wright. It can hardly be the coarseness of some of the stories which has prevented the "*Nouvelles*" from being presented to English readers when there are half a dozen versions of the "*Heptameron*," which is quite as coarse as the "*Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*," does not possess the same historical interest, and is not to be compared to the present work as regards either the stories or the style.

In addition to this, there is the history of the book itself, and its connection with one of the most important personages in French history—Louis XI. Indeed, in many French and English works of reference, the authorship of the "*Nouvelles*" has been attributed to him, and though in recent years, the writer is now believed—and no doubt correctly—to have been Antoine de la Salle, it is tolerably certain that Prince Louis heard all the stories related, and very possibly contributed several of them. The circumstances under which these stories came to be narrated require a few words of explanation.

At a very early age, Louis showed those qualities by which he was later distinguished. When he was only fourteen, he caused his father, Charles VII, much grief, both by his unfilial conduct and his behaviour to the beautiful Agnes Sorel, the King's mistress, towards whom he felt an implacable hatred. He is said to have slapped her face, because he thought she did not treat him with proper respect. This blow was, it is asserted, the primary cause of his revolt against his father's authority (1440). The rebellion was put down, and the Prince was pardoned, but relations between father and son were still strained, and in 1446, Louis had to betake himself to his appanage of

Dauphiné, where he remained for ten years, always plotting and scheming, and braving his father's authority.

At length the Prince's Court at Grenoble became the seat of so many conspiracies that Charles VII was obliged to take forcible measures. It was small wonder that the King's patience was exhausted. Louis, not content with the rule of his province, had made attempts to win over many of the nobility, and to bribe the archers of the Scotch Guard. Though not liberal as a rule, he had also expended large sums to different secret agents for some specific purpose, which was in all probability to secure his father's death, for he was not the sort of man to stick at parricide even, if it would secure his ends.

The plot was revealed to Charles by Antoine de Chabannes, Comte de Dampmartin. Louis, when taxed with his misconduct, impudently denied that he had been mixed up with the conspiracy, but denounced all his accomplices and allowed them to suffer for his misdeeds. He did not, however, forget to revenge them, so far as lay in his power. The fair Agnès Sorel, whom he had always regarded as his bitterest enemy, died shortly afterwards at Jumièges, and it has always been believed, and with great show of reason, that she was poisoned by his orders. He was not able to take vengeance on Antoine de Chabannes until after he became King.

Finding that his plots were of no avail, he essayed to get together an army large enough to combat his father, but before he completed his plans, Charles VII, tired of his endless treason and trickery, sent an army, under the faithful de Chabannes, into the Dauphiné, with orders to arrest the Dauphin.

The forces which Louis had at his disposal were numerically so much weaker that he did not dare to risk a battle.

"If God or fortune," he cried, "had been kind enough to give me but half the men-at-arms which now belong to the King, my father, and will be mine some day, by Our Lady, my mistress, I would have spared him the trouble of coming so far to seek me, but would have met him and fought him at Lyons."

Not having sufficient forces, and feeling that he could not hope for fresh pardon, he resolved to fly from France, and take refuge at the Court of the Duke of Burgundy.

One day in June, 1456, he pretended to go hunting, and then, attended by only half a dozen friends, rode as fast as he could into Burgundian territory, and arrived at Saint Claude.

From there he wrote to his father, excusing his flight, and announcing his intention of joining an expedition which Philippe

le Bon, the reigning Duke of Burgundy, was about to undertake against the Turks. The Duke was at that moment besieging Utrecht, but as soon as he heard the Dauphin had arrived in his dominions, he sent orders that he was to be conducted to Brussels with all the honours befitting his rank and station.

Shortly afterwards the Duke returned, and listened with real or pretended sympathy to all the complaints that Louis made against his father, but put a damper on any hopes that the Prince may have entertained of getting the Burgundian forces to support his cause, by saying:

"Monseigneur, you are welcome to my domains. I am happy to see you here. I will provide you with men and money for any purpose you may require, except to be employed against the King, your father, whom I would on no account displease."

Duke Philippe even tried to bring about a reconciliation between Charles and his son; but as Louis was not very anxious to return to France, nor Charles to have him there, and a good many of the nobles were far from desiring that the Prince should come back, the negotiations came to nothing.

Louis could make himself agreeable when he pleased, and during his stay in the Duke's domains, he was on good terms with Philippe le Bon, who granted him 3000 gold florins a month, and the castle of Genappe as a residence. This castle was situated on the Dyle, midway between Brussels and Louvain, and about eight miles from either city. The river, or a deep moat, surrounded the castle on every side. There was a drawbridge which was drawn up at night, so Louis felt himself quite safe from any attack.

Here he remained five years (1456-1461) until the death of his father placed him on the throne of France. It was during these five years that these stories were told to amuse his leisure. Probably there were many more than a hundred narrated—perhaps several hundreds—but the literary man who afterwards "edited" the stories only selected those which he deemed best, or, perhaps, those he heard recounted. The narrators were the nobles who formed the Dauphin's Court. Much ink has been spilled over the question whether Louis himself had any share in the production. In nearly every case the author's name is given, and ten of them (Nos. 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 29, 33, 69, 70 and 71) are described in the original edition as being by "Monseigneur." Publishers of subsequent editions brought out at the close of the 15th, or the beginning of the 16th Century, jumped to the conclusion that "Monseigneur" was really the Dauphin, who not

only contributed largely to the book, but after he became King, personally supervised the publication of the collected stories.

For four centuries Louis XI was credited with the authorship of the tales mentioned. The first person—so far as I am aware—to throw any doubt on his claim was the late Mr. Thomas Wright, who edited an edition of the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,” published by Jannet, Paris, 1858. He maintained, with some show of reason, that as the stories were told in Burgundy, by Burgundians, and the collected tales were “edited” by a subject of the Duke (Antoine de la Salle, of whom I shall have occasion to speak shortly), it was more probable that “Monseigneur” would mean the Duke than the Dauphin, and he therefore ascribed the stories to Philippe le Bel. Modern French scholars, however, appear to be of opinion that “Monseigneur” was the Comte de Charolais, who afterwards became famous as Charles le Temeraire, the last Duke of Burgundy.

The two great enemies were at that time close friends, and Charles was a very frequent visitor to Genappe. It was not very likely, they say, that Duke Philippe, who was an old man, would have bothered himself to tell his guest indecent stories. On the other hand, Charles, being then only Comte de Charolais, had no right to the title of “Monseigneur,” but they parry that difficulty by supposing that as he became Duke before the tales were printed, the title was given him in the first printed edition.

The matter is one which will, perhaps, never be satisfactorily settled. My own opinion—though I claim for it no weight or value—is that Louis appears to have the greatest right to the stories, though in support of that theory I can only adduce some arguments, which if separately weak, may have some weight when taken collectively. Vêrard, who published the first edition, says in the Dedication: “Et notez que par toutes les Nouvelles où il est dit par Monseigneur il est entendu par Monseigneur le Dauphin, lequel depuis a succédé à la couronne et est le roy Loys unsieme; car il estoit lors ès pays du duc de Bourgogne.”

The critics may have good reason for throwing doubt on Vêrard's statement, but unless he printed his edition from a M.S. made after 1467, and the copyist had altered the name of the Comte de Charolais to “Monseigneur,” it is not easy to see how the error arose, whilst on the other hand, as Vêrard had every facility for knowing the truth, and some of the copies must have been purchased by persons who were present when the stories were told, the mistake would have been rectified in

the subsequent editions that Vérard brought out in the course of the next few years, when Louis had been long dead and there was no necessity to flatter his vanity.

On examining the stories related by "Monseigneur," it seems to me that there is some slight internal evidence that they were told by Louis.

Brantôme says of him that, "he loved to hear tales of loose women, and had but a poor opinion of woman and did not believe they were all chaste. (This sounds well coming from Brantôme!) Anyone who could relate such tales was gladly welcomed by the Prince, who would have given all Homer, and Virgil too, for a funny story." The Prince must have heard many such stories, and would be likely to repeat them, and we find the first half dozen stories are decidedly "broad," (No. XI was afterwards appropriated by Rabelais, as "Hans Carvel's Ring"), and we may suspect that Louis tried to show the different narrators by personal example what he considered a really "good tale."

We know also Louis was subject to fits of religious melancholy, and evinced a superstitious veneration for holy things, and even wore little, leaden images of the saints round his hat. In many of the stories we find monks punished for their immorality, or laughed at for their ignorance, and nowhere do we see any particular veneration displayed for the Church. The only exception is No. LXX, "The Devil's Horn," in which a knight by sheer faith in the mystery of baptism vanquishes the Devil, whereas one of the knight's retainers, armed with a battle-axe but not possessing his master's robust faith in the efficacy of holy water, is carried off bodily, and never heard of again. It seems to me that this story bears the stamp of the character of Louis, who, though suspicious towards men, was childishly credulous in religious matters, but I leave the question for critics more capable than I to decide.

Of the thirty-two noblemen or squires who contributed the other stories, mention will be made in the notes. Of the stories, I may here mention that 14 or 15 were taken from Boccaccio, and as many more from Poggio or other Italian writers, or French "fabliaux," but about 70 of them appear to be original.

The knights and squires who told the stories had probably no great skill as "raconteurs," and perhaps did not read or write very fluently. The tales were written down afterwards by a literary man, and they owe "the crispness, fluency, and elegance," which, as Prof. Saintsbury remarks, they possess in such a

striking degree, to the genius of Antoine de la Salle. He was born in 1398 in Burgundy or Touraine. He had travelled much in Italy, and lived for some years at the Court of the Comte d'Anjou. He returned to Burgundy later, and was, apparently, given some sort of literary employment by Duke Philippe le Bel. At any rate he was appointed by Philippe or Louis to record the stories that enlivened the evenings at the Castle of Genappe, and the choice could not have fallen on a better man. He was already known as the author of two or three books, one of which—"Les Quinze Joyes du Mariage"—relates the woes of married life, and displays a knowledge of character, and a quaint, satirical humour that are truly remarkable, and remind the reader alternately of Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold,—indeed some of the Fifteen Joys are "Curtain Lectures" with a mediaeval environment, and the word-pictures of Woman's foibles, follies, and failings are as bright to-day as when they were penned exactly 450 years ago. They show that the "Eternal Feminine" has not altered in five centuries—perhaps not in five thousand!

The practised and facile pen of Antoine de la Salle clothed the dry bones of these stories with flesh and blood, and made them live and move. Considering his undoubted gifts as a humorist, and a delineator of character, it is strange that the name of Antoine de la Salle is not held in higher veneration by his countrymen, for he was the earliest exponent of a form of literary art in which the French have always excelled.

